

THE ELEMENTARY EDUCATION OF FEMALES IN ENGLAND 1800-  
1870, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE LIVES AND WORK  
OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN INDUSTRIAL LANCASHIRE AND RURAL  
NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK.

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### Abstract

The study explores the education and schooling of girls from the lower socio-economic ranks in the period between 1800 and 1870, with particular attention to the experiences of girls in the industrial regions of Lancashire and the agricultural districts of Norfolk and Suffolk. It aims both to reconstruct an area of the past hitherto 'hidden from history', and also to investigate critically the causes and consequences of girls' schooling and broader educational experiences through exploration of the wider socio-economic and cultural contexts in which that education was located.

The study thus includes areas and issues beyond those conventionally explored in histories of education. It examines changes and continuities in the lives and work of women, and links these to the purposes and practices of female elementary schooling and the informal educational experiences of girls in the industrial and rural communities of the two regions. It is organised in two main sections, focusing firstly on responses to changing economic and social conditions before the 1830s, then moving to an examination of the contributory influences which led to the 'reformism and respectability' of the post 1850 period.

Tensions and ambiguities are noted throughout; in relation to shifts and variations in the concept of the 'good' working-class wife and mother, and between the expressed ideals of elementary schooling and the realities of schooling provision and practices. Similarities and differences in the nature and quality of educational experiences across and within the selected regions are also noted, and it is through these dimensions that the key determinants of girls' educational experiences are clarified. The study then concludes with an assessment of the relative importance of schooling in the lives and work of women in the two regions, in an evaluation of the many educative influences which shaped their lives.



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Almost Uniformly Ignored: the nineteenth-century education of working-class girls

Why is it, asked an Inspector of elementary schools in 1856, that "in pamphlets and speeches and schemes of so called national education, they (girls) are almost uniformly ignored? (1) Until recently, Inspector Norris's question could well have been repeated by anyone with a familiarity with twentieth-century publications in the history of education. For, with the exception of the occasional somewhat superficial description of developments in the education of middle-class girls, the educational experiences of women and girls remained largely "hidden from history". (2)

Reasons for the omission of women from the pages of written history have frequently been discussed (3) and the case for women's history is now well known, if not always accepted or understood.(4) Felicity Hunt's criticism, that conservative approaches to the gender dimensions within the history of education have defined the education of boys as the 'bottom line' (5) still has validity, however, with what Clark described as long ago as 1919 as the "eternal feminine" model of women's history (6) still providing an axiomatic interpretive framework for many texts. To conclude, as did a recent review article in The Times Educational Supplement, that



"the history of women's education is no longer an unexplored field", (7) is to suggest a contentment with a view of historical events and developments that all too often is superficial, static and limited in its recognition of the intersections between gender and class in the formulation and implementation of educational policies and practices.

Nevertheless, considerable progress has been made, and to argue, as did Burstyn in 1977, that the history of education is written solely "from the perspective of boys and men" (8) would be to ignore the contribution of a number of recent publications which have gone some way towards extending our knowledge of the education of women and girls in the past. Many of these are publications, moreover, which by their broad approach to educational questions and the willingness of their authors to adopt and adapt conceptual tools and insights from the social sciences have also extended our understanding of the complexities of the relationship between schooling and other social institutions, events and processes in relation to female education. (9)

But several major challenges still remain. There remain, first of all, enormous gaps in our knowledge of the education of girls and women in the past and secondly, there are still a number of unresolved

challenges in the construction of theoretical frameworks through which this knowledge can be interpreted. It is these challenges which have been a major influence on my own research and in what follows I detail how they have shaped the approaches to, and the form taken by, this research.

Most immediately it was the existence of an enormous gap in our knowledge of the education of girls from the lower socio-economic ranks between 1800 and 1870 that first prompted an interest in this area. This crucial period in the development of mass elementary education has received considerable attention from historians, but the majority of mainstream texts indicate little awareness that the purposes and practices of elementary education might have been shaped by gender-related assumptions as much as by considerations of social class. With the exception of June Purvis, those historians and sociologists who have investigated the education of girls in the past have ignored this area and have focused their attention on the education of girls from higher social groups or on the post 1870 period.<sup>(10)</sup> Lack of knowledge, however, has been no bar to assumption and two distinct positions are discernible in those writings that have given some attention to the education of working-class girls in

this period. The first, evident in several publications dating from the later 1970s and 1980s argued the commonly assumed homogeneity between the education of boys and girls from these social groups as a fact. Delamont, for example, argued as "historical fact" that "the content of working-class education ... was hardly differentiated by sex" in this period, (11) while Marks stated:

There were few schools for either working-class boys or girls ... Their curricula were designed without reference to the needs and abilities thought to belong to either sex. Girls may well have been taught needlework, but that apart, their experience would have been much the same as that of the boys. (12)

Several recent publications have questioned this view, to argue that gender differentiation was a significant shaping factor in working-class education before 1870. Deirdre Beddoe, for example, has called the 'accepted truths' about a lack of gender differentiation in the content of working-class education before 1870 absurd, even nonsensical in schools where vocational training was given. (13) Ann Digby and Peter Searby also argue this alternative interpretation, referring to a "substantial provision" of domestic subjects and a hidden



curriculum which combined to limit girls' access to academic studies and lower their standards of achievement. (14) Unfortunately, in neither case here, nor in the other two examples cited above, is there much in the way of solid historical evidence to support either argument regarding girls' education before 1870. Indeed, though Annmarie Turnbull refers to "a small but growing body of evidence" suggesting that girls' education was different from that of boys, she gives no references to suggest where this evidence might be found for the period before 1870. (15) There is a danger, therefore, of replacing one set of relatively unquestioned assumptions with another, with both resting on flimsy foundations of historical ignorance.

The immediate overall purpose of this research, therefore, was to emend previous neglect and to investigate to what extent the schooling of girls differed from that of boys between 1800-1870. In addition, the intention was to locate this investigation within the context of nineteenth-century society. For, although in the absence of detailed knowledge, a straightforward description of the schooling of girls would be of some value, it would add little to our understanding of the purposes and significance of such schooling. The questions I

wished to pursue, therefore, related to gender differences in the relationships between social and educational ideals and purposes, to their influence on schooling practices, to the tensions between a whole range of economic, cultural and social factors which influenced both the provision of schooling and 'consumer' responses, and the importance of education and schooling in shaping attitudes and experiences. In short, my aim was to view the education of working-class girls "in society, as something of society, as forming and being formed by society." (16)

This approach clearly presented a number of challenges, not least in the sheer scale of the study. Ideally, given that gender encompasses both the masculine and the feminine, primary research would have extend across the education and schooling of both girls and boys but, clearly, this was not feasible. Nor was it feasible to attempt a national survey of girls' schooling for, somewhat paradoxically, although primary evidence about girls' education has proved to be rather more limited than that available for boys' for this period, ambiguities in terminology and the use of the word 'pupils' rather than 'boys' can mean that an abundance of material must be read before the absence of girls from the historical record is revealed. (17)

Key issues of interpretation are also raised here. In seeking to understand the interactive relationship between education and schooling and social values and ideologies it is necessary to employ an interpretive framework which allows exploration of the intersections between class and gender with all their social, economic, cultural and historical variations. (18) This interpretive framework is provided by the concept of patriarchy. Very simply, (the issues are explored in depth in the next chapter), my argument begins from the premise that while differences between the sexes are biological in origin, definitions of masculinity and femininity are historically, socially and culturally specific, with education (widely defined to include family, work and community experiences as well as schooling) playing a major role in the reproduction and legitimation of gender relations. In the nineteenth century social relations were patriarchal which, whilst being hierarchical and locating people according to their social/occupational rank, enabled men to share a dominance over women. The primary location of patriarchy lay within the family, with male power being derived from the female dependence which was sustained and maintained by sexual divisions of labour in the family and the workplace



and which limited the ability of women to be economically independent. The particular forms of patriarchy which shaped nineteenth-century society, however, were inextricably bound up with the development of capitalist economic structures, while the experience of patriarchy was mediated by social class/occupational/income differences.

A number of points follow from this. If, as I argue, one of the functions of education was to sustain and legitimate patriarchy, it follows that the relationship between education and paid and unpaid work was crucial, and one would expect this to be reflected in girls' schooling - or the lack of it. Did schools serve to prepare girls for a domestic future? To what extent did the values and practices of the labour market influence schooling and responses to it? and vice-versa? What, indeed, were the values and practices of the labour market?

This identification of the paid and unpaid work of women and girls as a key issue has shaped this research in several ways. Firstly, it provided the criteria for selection of focus, with the decision being made to locate the study in geographical regions where the economically productive work of women showed substantial variation, that is, in the cotton and woollen textile regions of the north and

midlands, the agricultural counties of Suffolk and Norfolk and the region of Greater London, with its very mixed occupational opportunities for females. (19)

In deciding to focus the inquiry on these particular geographical locations I was aware that I was giving a lesser importance to other variables which might prove to be influential on local practices; differing religious affiliations, for example, or the possible influence of Scottish educational traditions in the counties of the far north which might operate to give girls access to the 'higher branches' of education. (20) Nor were the occupations of women in these regions necessarily 'typical' of women's work in the period, indeed the Lancashire factory girl was very atypical of nineteenth-century women, being employed in relatively well-paid work and getting more than her share of public attention. The regions and female occupations selected, however, were chosen specifically to illustrate the varying social and cultural impact of changes in the organisation of production in industry and agriculture in the period and thus to provide a picture of educational responses to economic and social change.

A substantial amount of primary evidence was

investigated for these regions, to reveal strong similarities in patterns of provision and the practices of girls' schooling, yet with considerable variations within these patterns relating to local conditions and the timing and pace of economic and social changes. There was a danger, therefore, that an obfuscation of historical detail could obscure similarities in the schooling and educational experiences of girls across different geographical regions, and of common factors in the causes and consequences of gender differentiation in schooling and education. For this reason, it was decided to focus the study specifically on the two very contrasting regions of rural Norfolk and Suffolk and the cotton textile districts of industrial Lancashire, and to employ primary evidence from other regions generally for purposes of illustration and comparison.

Secondly, exploration of links between economic and social organisation and education must necessarily be supported by detailed evidence of gender divisions of labour; of changes in women's work in the family and the labour market and of social attitudes towards it during the period. Simply to reiterate without question the conclusions of historians, no matter how sound their grasp of feminist issues, would be to



eschew the detailed and complex interrelations that constructed the historical process and to ignore many subtleties of shifts and emphases over time, place and occupation. (21) Thus, considerable attention is given to changes in the organisation of production in cotton textiles and agriculture in the chosen areas and to developments and tensions in social responses to economic change.

The possible influence of schooling must also be measured against other influences on behaviours and values, which again must be examined. Chapter 2, therefore, develops the theoretical models which have informed the research to explore interconnections between the cultural values of patriarchy and economic and social organisation. Chapters 3 and 6 then take up these arguments and relate them to the social, economic and ideological context of working-class life through a detailed investigation of changes in women's work in agriculture and cotton textiles. (22) Chapters 4 and 5 and 7 and 8 focus more specifically on educational issues to explore the theoretical purposes of mass schooling provided for the working classes, working-class responses to these and the realities of educational practices across a variety of schools. Chapter 9 then concludes the discussion by reconsideration of the connections

between education and economic and cultural spheres in relation to the education of girls throughout the period .

In adopting this broad approach, the study also touches on a number of areas which have been, and continue to be, the subject of major historical dispute. The emergence of class consciousness and identity, for example, was an integral element in shifts and changes in ideologies regarding women's social and occupational roles and in the development of mass schooling, but the chronology of the 'making' of the working class, its composition and 'ideological characteristics' (23) continue to be the subjects of vigorous debate. (24) The complexities of the issues again emphasise the importance and value of a detailed, 'local' approach, with the identification of significant differences in responses to economic and social change across the two regions enabling clarification of causes and consequences in the education and schooling of working-class girls.

The resolution of difficulties presented by periodisation was also suggested by this local perspective. For despite considerable regional and occupational variation in the timing and pace of innovation and adaptation, the evidence suggests a

broadly compatible chronological pattern in responses to change. The study is subdivided into two main sections, therefore, with chapters 3, 4 and 5 focussing on the first three decades of the century; a transitional period when the profound economic change associated with early industrialisation and the spread of capitalist farming was prompting enormous social change but when the continuance of residual, inherited and 'traditional' (25) attitudes and expectations still influenced perceptions of and responses to such changes. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 then consider the period from around the later 1830s to 1870, the year which saw the passage of the first major Education Act concerned with elementary education. The period was, broadly, one of accommodation to change, when attitudes and practices were redefined and adapted in line with changed economic and social conditions. It was also the period when the purposes and practices of working-class education became more explicitly the province of central government and also more overtly a means of furthering the patriarchal cultural values which pervaded all ranks of Victorian society.

There are several further points to be made to underline the importance of the wide approach adopted within this study - despite the difficulties and



dangers that such an approach presents. Education is not confined to what takes place in schools but encompasses a whole range of institutions and experiences, both formal and informal; from family life, to religion and the churches, to membership of societies and clubs, the community and so on. The working-class family played a primary role in the education and socialisation of children, and the extent to which families transmitted values that conflicted with those expressed in the provided schools is clearly important. The importance of the educative influence of the family is reinforced by the fact that few girls attended provided schools under compulsion during the period, (26) school attendance was generally brief and erratic and many families chose to leave their daughters almost entirely unschooled or to send them to the private schools which, as commercial enterprises, had to be responsive to parental wishes. Work too was an educative experience; both directly in the sense that children learned literacy and vocational skills (formally, through apprenticeships and work schools, and informally) and indirectly in the sense that conditions of work 'taught' particular forms of behaviour. Indeed, as Gray and Joyce have argued, working-class behaviours were as much responses to

the material circumstances of peoples' lives as to any ideological influences (27) and despite evidence of increasing conformity to patriarchal values, it cannot be assumed that working-class girls accepted the 'domestic' values of the Victorian middle classes simply because that is what was taught in the provided schools.

It is here, in assessment of the impact of schooling, that the limitations imposed by the lack of evidence originating from the working classes themselves are most acutely felt. But these limitations also impose major restrictions in other areas. For example, the popularity of private schools for working-class girls demands detailed exploration of parental motives for patronising such establishments and of their purposes and practices. But the sources such as autobiography and census returns that Gardner has used to counter balance the class-specific perspective in the majority of primary sources are either almost totally unavailable in the case of girls or require extensive research beyond the scope of this study.(28) Similar difficulties limit investigation of other alternative forms of schooling and education which were generated by the working classes themselves. The activities of Owenite Sunday schools and classes for women were sometimes

reported in the radical press (29), and June Purvis has done much to uncover information about female involvement - or lack of involvement - in the many mutual improvement classes that were such a feature of 'respectable' working-class life in the industrial north around mid century. (30) It is largely through male autobiography, however, that we learn about the private reading and the supportive friendships between like-minded men that encouraged self-education (31), and the almost complete absence of female autobiography dating from this period leaves us in ignorance about female involvement in such activities.(32)

The voices of working-class women are audible, at second hand, in the oral testimony given to Commissions of Inquiry and these give some insight into individual experiences and attitudes.(33) Male autobiography also gives first hand accounts of working-class life and there are numerous observations of working-class behaviour and attitudes written by middle-class authors. But male autobiography was often reticent about personal relationships and family behaviours and all these sources inevitably reflect the biases of their authors and must be filtered, as it were, through a net constructed from our knowledge of class and



gender attitudes. (34) The historical invisibility of working-class women also precludes other approaches which have proved successful in research related to boys. (35) Inevitably, therefore, the specifically 'educational' content of this study is forced to rely on those official and rather more 'middle-class' sources which do provide detailed evidence about the schooling of girls. Careful reading both on and between the lines of documents does provide a wealth of information, however, particularly where mention is made of what were regarded as the weaknesses and failures of education. Equally inevitably, this also means that possibly greater attention is given to provided schooling than its contemporary significance warrants. The charity schools, the day and Sunday schools of the two major educational societies, the factory schools and the workhouse schools which are a major focus of this research were the forerunners of the state system of education and were, therefore, of greater ultimate importance, but they represent only a part of the formal education available to the working classes. As their continuing popularity in the face of middle-class condemnation illustrates, the private schools were as, if not more, important from the consumer point of view. The private schools, and other 'alternative' educational facilities are

considered, therefore, if not in equal detail, with an equal awareness of their importance. And, again, the broad scope of the study is justified by the need to utilise evidence wherever it is available, from the remarks of, for example, a local clergyman to the views expressed in a radical newspaper, and from the detailed evidence of an Education Inquiry to the circumstantial evidence of broad social trends culled from a wide variety of primary and secondary source materials.

One final point remains to be made. The study draws on both local and national evidence to draw general conclusions regarding the education of working-class girls over a 70<sup>year</sup> period. It may be, as has happened with studies of the education of boys, that further local studies will reveal influences and dimensions not evident from this research. It is to be hoped that this will be the case, for only through continuing investigation of local practices can a fully comprehensive picture of working-class girls' schooling be achieved. It is also hoped that, despite the difficulties inherent in such an approach, the broadly-based investigation pursued here will also be continued. For only through such investigations, which locate the history of education in the cultural and socio-economic context of people's lives, can the

causes and consequences of their schooling and other educational experiences be even partially understood.



## Notes

1. Inspector Norris, P.P. 1856 XLVII, p. 386.
2. Rowbotham, S. Hidden from History, London, 1973.  
See, for example, Joan Burstyn's bibliography of published material. Burstyn, J. 'Women's Education during the Nineteenth Century: a Review of the Literature', History of Education, 1977, 6, 1, pp. 11-19.  
The work of Josephine Kamm is representative of the hagiographic and 'Whiggish' perspective that also frequently characterised those publications that were available.  
Kamm, J. How Different from Us: a Biography of Miss Buss and Miss Beale, London, 1958, and Indicative Past: a Hundred Years of the Girls' Public Day School Trust, London, 1971.
3. See, for example, Lewis, J. 'Women Lost and Found: the Impact of Feminism on History', in Spender, D. (ed.) Men's Studies Modified. The Impact of Feminism on the Academic Disciplines, London, 1981. Davin, A., 'Women and History' in Wandor, M. (ed.), The Body Politic, London, 1972, and Carroll, B. (ed.), Liberating Women's History, Illinois, 1976.  
  
Also see Purvis's discussion of 'male centred histories' in Purvis, J. Hard Lessons: The Lives and Education of Working-Class Women in Nineteenth-Century England, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 7-11.
4. Bryant argues that the case for women's history is now "well worn" but Hobsbawm and Elton, for example, have found it difficult to come to grips with this. Bryant, M. Review of 'Hard Lessons', History of Education Quarterly, 31,1, Spring 1991. Alexander, S., Davin, A., and Hostettler, E., 'Labouring Women: a Reply to Eric Hobsbawm', History Workshop, Autumn, 1979, p. 174. Purvis, J. op.cit., p.11.
5. Hunt, F.(ed.) Lessons for Life: The Schooling of Girls and Women 1850-1950, Oxford, 1987, p.xii. An illuminating perspective on 'male centered' history of education was provided by Anna Davin with regard to conventional explanations for the development of state involvement in working-class education and the passing of the 1870 Education Act. Davin pointed out,  
These developments were justified at the

time, and have been discussed since by historians in social, political and economic terms ... The political explanations relate most directly to the growing labour movement, in which women played no part at this time, and to the 1867 Franchise Act which created a million or so new voters, none of them women; while the economic context concerns the development of a new skilled and literate workforce ... from which women (to begin with at least) were again absent. If such political and economic grounds were the only reasons for introducing more general elementary education, one might ask why girls were included at all.

Davin, A., "Mind that You Do as You are Told": Reading Books for Board School Girls', Feminist Review, (3), 1979, p.89.

English historians of education were also slow to respond to the challenges presented by 'new' social history, leading to a history of English education that has been, to use Silver's adjectives, 'top-heavy', 'empty', 'one-dimensional', 'isolated' and 'purblind' as well as overwhelmingly concerned with male actions and experiences. Silver, H., 'Aspects of Neglect: the Strange Case of Victorian Popular Education', in Education as History, London, 1983, p.21.

Silver's criticisms, however, also illustrate the fact that attempts to widen understanding and to explore unfamiliar concepts and theoretical models do not necessarily imply the integration of women's and girls' experiences into the mainstream of inquiry. For his inclusion of women in the category of 'minorities' and the male-oriented language he employs is strongly suggestive of the 'eternal feminine' in his own interpretations of history.

Similarly, other, more radical approaches to the history of education may also ignore the applications and implications of educational developments to women and girls. Richard Johnson's pioneering attempt to explore the "social assumptions implicit in a particular measure" by reference to the Minutes of 1846, for example, showed no awareness that the 'civilising' of the working-class family could have different implications for the two sexes. Johnson, R., 'Educational Policy and Social Control in Early Victorian England', Past and Present, no. 49, 1970. With the exception of the article by Beryl

Madoc-Jones, similar criticisms can be made of the explorations of the concept of social control in the collection of papers edited by Mc.Cann. Mc.Cann, P. (ed.), Popular Education and Socialisation in the Nineteenth Century, Sussex, 1977. Gardner's otherwise excellent study of working-class private schools also adds little to our understanding of gender dimensions within education "as a site of class-cultural conflict". Gardner, P., The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England, London, 1984.

6. Clark, A., Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century, London, 1919, 1968 edition, p. 1. It might be argued that 'the eternal feminine' has simply been redefined in a number of more recent publications, to encompass the eternal female 'victim', forced by male oppression to labour under the double burden of employment and domestic responsibilities. Neither model is satisfactory, without exploration of the multi-faceted contributory variables in the conditions of women's lives and employment.
7. J. Saraga, 'Determined Women', The Times Educational Supplement, 13/9/1991, p.43.
8. Burstyn, op.cit., p.18.
9. Such publications would include Bryant, M. The Unexpected Revolution, London, 1979. Dyhouse, C. Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Early Edwardian England, London, 1981. Purvis, J., 'The Double Burden of Class and Gender in the Schooling of Working-Class Girls in Nineteenth-Century England' in Barton, L., and Walker, S., Schools, Teachers and Teaching, Sussex, 1981, Purvis J., Hard Lessons, op.cit., Purvis, J. A History of Women's Education in England, Sussex, 1991. Delamont, S. and Duffin, L., The Nineteenth-Century Woman, her Cultural and Physical World, London, 1978 and Hunt F., op.cit.  
Sutherland refers to "the enormous growth in publications about the education of girls and women during the last two decades" in her introduction to an international bibliography of recent literature. Britton, M.C. Improved Visibility: an international bibliography on the education of women and girls 1978-1989, Librarians of Institutes and Schools of Education, University of Leeds, 1991.
10. Purvis, J. 'Working Class Women and Adult



Education in Nineteenth-Century Britain', History of Education, 9, 3, 1980. 'Women's Life is Essentially Domestic, Public Life Being Confined to Men' (Comte): Separate Spheres and Inequality in the Education of Working-Class Women 1854-1900, History of Education, 10, 4, 1981. 'Towards a History of Women's Education in Nineteenth-Century Britain: a Sociological Analysis', Westminster Studies in Education, 4, 1981. See also Purvis's publications cited in note 9 above.

11. Delamont and Duffin, op.cit., p.164.
12. Marks, P. 'Femininity in the Classroom: an Account of Changing Attitudes' in Mitchell, J. and Oakley, A., The Rights and Wrongs of Women, Harmondsworth 1976.
13. Beddoes, D., Discovering Women's History, London, 1983, p.52.
14. Digby, A. and Searby, P., Children, Schools and Society in Nineteenth-Century England, London, 1981, p.46.
15. Turnbull, A., 'Learning Her Womanly Work: the Elementary School Curriculum 1870-1914', in Hunt, op.cit., p.83.
16. Silver, op.cit., p. 31.
17. Records for both boys' and girls' schools are relatively limited for this period, but fewer sources of evidence are available for girls' schools. The Annual Reports of the National and British Societies, for example, contain many lengthy accounts of the progress of boys' schools, often with detailed reference to curriculum provision, standards of achievement and so forth, but only rarely are girls' schools given more than a brief mention. A contributory factor here may have been the common practice of delegating the day-to-day running of the girls' departments and schools to a Ladies Committee. These committees submitted their reports to the male Management Committees (as was required by the rules of the British Society, P.P. 1816 IV p.121), a not unexpected procedure in a society which assumed male authority and which relegated the concerns of females to the attention of females - except when important decisions were to be made. Such procedures, however, probably reinforced a preoccupation on the part of male

school managers with the boys' schools, not least because they had little first-hand knowledge of daily proceedings in the girls' schools. It also had the effect of limiting the historian's access to information about the girls' schools as, in the nature of things, the documents which survive tend to be those which are seen to be important (that is, male records of male concerns), and few of the Ladies Committees' Reports are to be found.

Similar ambiguities in language are often found in twentieth-century publications with references to 'children' and 'pupils' meaning that many articles etc. have to be read with particular care, simply to discover if girls were included amongst the children so described.

18. See Purvis 'Hard Lessons', op.cit., pp.15-17 for a brief discussion on the ways in which historians employing theoretical frameworks derived from Marxist traditions have subsumed relationships of gender within those of class. These issues are returned to in the next chapter 'The Weaker Vessel?'.
19. The original intention was to base the study on an examination of women's work and education in the wool and woollen textile districts of South and West Yorkshire and Derbyshire, and also the region of Greater London with its very mixed (though limited) occupational opportunities for women and girls. A substantial amount of primary evidence related to schooling was collected for these regions, but, though initial expectations of strong similarities in the education of girls were broadly confirmed, the variations over time and place that were also revealed meant that the study very quickly outgrew its bounds in terms of the mass of evidence collected. Again, this emphasised the value of a geographically- and occupationally-based focus, in enabling the identification of contributory variables in the similarities and the differences found within and between regions.
20. Lindy Moore concluded that Scottish girls were less likely to attend school than boys, many attended private schools and "proportionally fewer studied each successive stage of education", all of which suggests little difference between the educational experiences of Scottish and English girls. But, as Moore points out, girls were able to learn subjects like Latin



and French and enjoy a secondary type education, if their parents so wished, because of the "tradition that the 'higher branches' (of education) should be made available to all school pupils". Moore, L., 'Invisible Scholars: Girls Learning Latin and Mathematics in the Elementary Public Schools of Scotland before 1872', History of Education, vol.13, no.12, 1984, p.137.

21. Bryant comments, for example, that Purvis's construction of "ideological stereotypes" "deprives the book ('Hard Lessons') of a sense of real historical process" and inadequately distinguishes or interrelates the "complex levels of Victorian society". Bryant, review of Purvis J. 'Hard Lessons', op.cit p.137.
22. The scale of the subject has forced a heavy reliance on secondary source materials here, even perhaps an over reliance on those studies, which incorporate the 'female perspective'. Fortunately, publications which recognise critically the full economic roles of women are increasing in number. Maxine Berg, for example, commented that "the impact of culture, community and family in the workplace is ignored" by economic historians but her work is addressing these issues, as is that of Patrick Joyce, Judy Lown and Angela John. Berg, M., The Age of Manufactures 1700-1820, London, 1985, p.196. Joyce, P., Work, Society and Politics: the Culture of the Factory in Late Victorian England, London, 1980. Lown, J. Women and Industrialisation: Gender at Work in Nineteenth-Century England, Cambridge, 1990. John, A. (ed.) Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918, Oxford, 1983. Snell's research on agrarian change also discusses changing patterns of women's agricultural employment, though his understanding of the operations of gender divisions of labour appears to assume 'natural' differences in the capacities and responsibilities of men and women before the Victorian period. Snell, K.D.M. Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900, Cambridge, 1985. Those primary sources that are easily accessible, eg, the evidence presented in parliamentary papers, were also used wherever possible.
23. Glen, R. Urban Workers in the Early Industrial Revolution, London, 1984, p.2.



24. These are summarised in Glen, op.cit pp 1-14; and Rule, J., The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England, London, 1986, pp. 383-393. The term 'working-class girls' is used throughout this study for ease of expression. It is not intended to convey an understanding of any particular point at which class divisions emerged.
25. The word 'traditional' is employed crudely here, of course. See Snell's discussion of 'customary' and 'traditional' attitudes. Snell, op.cit, p.100. These issues are explored in greater depth in Chapter Two, but two points may briefly be made:
1. The development of a working-class 'consciousness', in the sense of a distinct and separate class awareness, does not necessarily involve the adoption of changed, 'new' or 'revolutionary' attitudes;
  2. Divisions within the working classes included major differences in attitudes.
- Rule refers to "the broad divisions both material and in terms of consciousness which were to be found among the workers" in this period, and quotes Mayhew's description of differences between the artisans and unskilled labourers of London in 1849 in illustration:
- The artisans are almost to a man red hot politicians. They are sufficiently educated and thoughtful to have a sense of their own importance in the state ... The unskilled labourers are a different class of people ... They appear to have no political opinions whatever; or if they do possess any, they rather lead towards the maintenance of things as they are; rather than towards the ascendancy of the working people.
- Rule, op.cit., p. 386.
26. Schooling was compulsory, in theory at least, for female factory employees covered by the legislation of 1833 and 1846. Girls from pauper families also attended school under compulsion in the workhouses established by the 1834 Act. As is argued in chapter 7, the benefits of such schooling were often very limited.
27. Gray, R., The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth-

Century Britain 1850-1914, London, 1981, p.39;  
Joyce, op.cit., p.xxvii

28. Gardner, op.cit., p. 9-10, appendices A and B, pp. 246-48.
29. Taylor, B. Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century, London, 1983, p.341, note 50.
30. Purvis, J. 'Hard Lessons'. And see the sources cited by Kirk. Kirk, N., The Growth of Working-Class Reformism in Mid-Victorian Britain, Beckenham, 1985, p.235, notes 79-83; p.238, notes 190-193.
31. Vincent cites examples of this. Vincent, D. Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: a Study of Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Autobiography, London, 1981, p.126-7.
32. Vincent located six autobiographies written by women during the first half of the nineteenth century. Both he and Thirsk discuss the reasons why so few working-class female autobiographies are available to us. These range from high rates of female illiteracy, lack of time, the 'subordinate position' of women in the family, their absence from most forms of working-class organisation (after the 1840s) which provided "training and stimulus for self-expression" and so forth. Vincent, op.cit., p.8; Thirsk, J., in Prior, M. (Ed.), Women in English Society 1500-1800, London, 1985, p.2.  
The scarcity of this resource makes judgements regarding typicality particularly problematic. As Burnett has commented with regard to the male autobiographer,  
It is necessary to recognise that the autobiographer ... was engaged in an activity which set him apart from the majority of his fellow men and that to this extent he was not a representative figure.  
Burnett, J., Useful Toil, London, 1974, p.12.
33. For example, testimony presented to the Commissions of Inquiry into the employment of women and children in the mines and in agriculture. P.P. 1842 XV, pp.242-252; P.P.1843 XII, p.113; P.P. 1867-8 XVII, appendix to the first report.  
Burnett has commented that the mass of evidence contained in nineteenth-century enquiries remains

amongst the most important sources for nineteenth-century social history. As he also says, however, these sources must be used with care,

They necessarily represent a bias, ..., of the investigator who decided what questions were to be asked, and framed them in his own way; witnesses who were led - sometimes consciously, more often unconsciously - to make responses to particular, selected questions which were the most important to the observer but not necessarily to the witness.

Burnett, op.cit., p.10.

34. The 6 works cited by Vincent, for example, contain very little information about the private lives of their authors. Vincent, op.cit., p.40.

Though see the section on 'Home and Family' in Burnett, J., Destiny Obscure, London 1982, pp.215-318, for mainly late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century evidence. Twentieth-century autobiography is, in general, much more outspoken about the private life of authors. Burnett 1974, op.cit., p.14 and 17.

35. The compilation of case histories, for example, provided Michael Sanderson with an objective check against other primary sources and provided extensive data on the educational experiences of over 60 'children' (boys) in early nineteenth-century Lancashire. Sanderson, M., 'Social History and Elementary Education in Industrial Lancashire 1780-1840', Northern History, University of Leeds, vol.3, 1968, p.136 note 28. Gratton used evidence of occupational destinations for evidence about the impact of schooling on the lives of boys, but excluded women from this aspect of his research because, as he states, there was insufficient evidence available. Gratton, J.M., 'Literacy, Educational Provision and Social Structure in the first half of the Nineteenth Century: the Case of Liverpool's Suburban Periphery', unpublished M.Ed. dissertation, University of Liverpool, 1982.



### The Weaker Vessel?

A necessary prerequisite to understanding the purposes, nature and impact of the education available to girls from the lower socio-economic ranks in the nineteenth century is an appreciation of the cultural and economic context in which that education was located. This immediately raises issues of great complexity for attitudes towards the socio-economic roles of women and the material conditions of their lives were subject to considerable variation over place, time and circumstance. (1) In addition, exploration of the social roles of women must be set within an interpretative framework for, to use the words of E.P. Thompson,

The question, of course, is how the individual got to be in this 'social role', and how the particular social organisation (with its property rights and structure of authority) got to be there. (2)

Those familiar with Thompson's work will immediately recognise that his words are being used somewhat inappropriately for he refers here to relations defined by social class and not by gender. Yet the relevance of his words to the subject matter of this chapter, indeed to the whole body of this research, illustrates the way in which a preoccupation with

divisions of social class has obscured other bases of social division, notably that of gender. Theoretical models which see class divisions as fundamental do not permit adequate recognition of gender-differentiated experiences which cut across the parameters of class, no matter how 'class' might be defined. So, while discussion of social class divisions (whether seen as harmonious or antagonistic; whether defined by income, property, power, occupation, relation to production, shared consciousness or any other criteria) might include women as daughters or wives, exploration of, even recognition of, any shared cross-class links contained within contemporary definitions of masculinity and femininity is precluded. Neale recognised, for example, that

Women are generally subsumed within the more or less homogeneous classes, with the aid of which historians think about the past, according to the positions allocated allocated to their fathers and husbands.

(3)

Considerable, often controversial, debate has thus been stimulated amongst historians interested in women's history as to theoretical schema which permit analysis of class and gender with historical specificity.(4) And attention has been given to the

development and employment of an interpretative framework that encompasses the basis and structure of relationships between men and women with all their cultural and historical variations and the interaction between these and social and economic organisation and institutional arrangements. The concept of patriarchy provides one such schema and has been widely employed by feminist historians. Yet the concept of patriarchy is not without its own difficulties and as Lown has commented, "to start talking in terms of patriarchy is to enter a conceptual minefield".(5) Broad general consensus has been accorded to the view that patriarchy (simply defined here as male domination over women) pre-dates capitalist economic organisation and that, as Beechey has described, capitalism "developed on the basis of the patriarchal domestic economy which was already in existence".(6) Considerable controversy, however, still surrounds precise definitions of 'patriarchy' and of the relationship between gender relations and economic organisation. Hartmann, for example, has attempted to 'marry' Marxist theory with feminist theory by conceptualising 'capitalism' and 'patriarchy' as co-existing systems (7) but her definition of patriarchy has been sharply criticised



as being too narrowly economic. She defined patriarchy as:

a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them which enable them in turn to dominate women. The material base of patriarchy is men's control over women's labour power. That control is maintained by excluding women from necessary economically productive resources and restricting women's sexuality.(8)

Others have argued that this definition gives insufficient weight to psychology, ideology and culture and Hartmann herself has admitted to some sympathy with these views. (9) A central problem with Hartmann's analysis and her model of a healthy and strong partnership reconciled from the potentially conflicting interests of patriarchy and capital, (10) however, lies in the asymmetrical nature of the partnership thus developed. For, as Lown has pointed out, the dualistic model of social relationships that is inevitably suggested by attempts to reconcile Marxist analysis with patriarchy, generally accords a theoretical primacy to economic hierarchies and obscures the possible impact of patriarchy on economic relations.(11) The point is not made to develop an unproductive 'chicken and egg' type

discourse (12) but to highlight the importance of recognising a reciprocal interaction between patriarchal values and social divisions within the family and economic organisation. This reciprocity has been stressed by recent research in the field of nineteenth-century family history as summarised by Anderson. "Recent work has stressed" he states,

the extent to which 'traditional' attitudes influenced the strategies adopted by families whose members became involved in factory and other large-scale capitalist work organisation ... However, the relationship is not seen only as a one way affair; the same research stresses the need for employers to adopt strategies of labour recruitment which did not interfere too drastically with these same 'traditional' value systems.(13)

Edward Thompson's study of the making of the English working class in the early industrial period also qualifies the force of economic relations as a determinant of human responses. He argues a "cultural superstructure" which is "embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas and institutional forms" and through which men recognise, in inefficient ways, their relationship to the means of production.(14) Thompson's argument, therefore, as summarised by Tosh, is "that consciousness was not the automatic

by-product of of the factory system but was the outcome of reflection on experience in the light of a vigorous native tradition." (15)

Bowles and Gintis have developed a theory of 'transportability' which also moves away from a simple base/superstructure model of economic determinism. This theory argues that, "in their struggle and confrontation" groups attempt to 'transport' practices characteristic of one social site, eg the family, to other sites, eg capitalist production, (16) and implicitly recognises that there may be what Apple has called "cultural pre-conditions" to all political and economic action. (17)

My argument draws on these theories and Lown's insights to argue that "patriarchal power, characterised in terms of organising and rationalising social relations based on male superiority and female inferiority" constitutes a major 'cultural precondition' which, at one and the same time, is located in the family and in economic relations and which "pervade the major institutions and belief systems of society". (18) The argument thus sees 'traditional' attitudes as patriarchal attitudes with patriarchal social relations, that is, hierarchical relations in which women, children and younger men are subordinate to older men,



constituting a " pivotal organising principle" (19) manifested in ways which are culturally and historically specific. 'Transportability' is therefore reversed, with the threatened erosion of patriarchy in one site leading to struggles and tensions across a number of sites and with the reassertion of patriarchy, albeit in modified form, leading to accommodation and stability.

Lown's analysis extends the discussion by identification of the processes whereby patriarchal authority is confirmed and sustained over time. That is, in my argument, how 'traditional' patriarchal relations provided both a definitive pre-conditional structure into which economic and social change could be accommodated and, via the forms of social interaction which legitimised such relations, provided a strategic means for the incorporation of such change with the minimum of upheaval.(20) In short, how patriarchy provided (and provides) both a pattern and procedures for adaptation and change.

Lown has argued that what distinguished the place of the individual within the pre-industrial social order was the degree of dependency contained in his/her relationship to the head of the household. She offers no explanation, however, as to why women were necessarily in a position of dependency in relation

to men within the social hierarchy. The basic foundations of patriarchy are provided by the physical differences of sex and age but it is the social interpretation of the meaning of such differences that is crucial to the construction of social hierarchies. Biological differences between men and women, the child-bearing capacity of women and the immediate physical prowess of men prompt differences in roles through a sexual division of labour - man to the plough/sword, woman to the cradle/cow. Inequalities in social relationships between men and women that arise from such differences are not 'natural', and their apparent inevitability stems from their universality rather than any a priori determinant. Here, as Lown has identified, the related factors of dependency and power are crucial. Female dependency does not arise simply because women may be dependent on men for food and protection during pregnancy and child birth and while they are rearing infant children. Nor does male power simply stem from physical force, despite the potency of 'might is right' as an argument even when restrained by moral and legal sanctions.(21) Rather, they arise from two inter-related sources. Firstly, from the availability of opportunities to adult males to gain and intensify personal power at the expense

of females and thereby transform differences into inequalities. And secondly, from a shared perception that relationships of male dominance and female subordination are legitimate - and immutable. The processes by which such relations are achieved are an intensification of the sexual division of labour whereby women are largely denied access to well-paid work and through the operation of ideologies which encourage acquiescence and disarm opposition. (The sexual division of labour is discussed at length later in this chapter)

Ideologies operate at several levels within this process. At the level of the individual, they operate to define the cultural norms, the parameters within which individuals acquire a sense of self and against which they measure their own experiences. Even more significantly, dominant cultural values translate into ideologies which operate at the societal level to define and support social, economic and political practices and encourage adherence to the ideological/cultural status quo. Moreover ideologies sustain the status quo by presenting the 'ideal', however defined, as both desirable and attainable. Failure to achieve this 'ideal' is thus glossed over as a consequence of personal inadequacy or simple misfortune. Simply expressed, the expression of



ideologies might be seen as a rule-bearing mechanism whereby social, political and economic harmony is encouraged through a mutually reinforcing adherence to common cultural values.

Further, dependence provides the foundations that enable power relations to become moral ones.(22) Thus, while men and women co-exist in a reciprocal relationship with obligations on both sides, the equilibrium of this relationship is distorted by inequalities embedded in social and economic structures and cultural norms, which transform it into one between superordinate and subordinate. While social and cultural norms define the parameters of the relationship, the power of the superordinate male gives greater personal choice in the interpretation and fulfilment of obligations whilst the female subordinate defers and conforms. The possibility of negotiation (23), even resistance, remains but conformity to the status quo is ever easier than resistance, particularly when non-conformity carries heavy penalties. The social relationship, therefore, is characterised by male paternalism and female deference (in terms of both behaviour and attitudes) which further confirm and legitimise inequalities. As Joyce has neatly summed up, deference

is the social relationship that converts power relations into moral ones, and ensures the stability of hierarchy threatened by the less efficient, potentially unstable, co-ercive relationship. Deference establishes stabilisation by means of the superordinate's manipulation of the situation; in essence the management of opposing tensions of differentiation from and identification with, the subordinate.(24)

The picture here presented is, however, excessively deterministic and fails to recognise or explore the often considerable disjunctions that can exist between ideologies and cultural 'norms' and the multiple realities of everyday life. Eileen Power remarked of mediaeval women, for example, that "the position of women is one thing in theory, another in legal position, yet another in everyday life", and her suggestion that a "rough and ready equality" between the sexes could operate in practice has also been put forward by several other historians also.(25) Indeed, Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm have argued in the context of proto-industrial domestic production in Europe that a shared responsibility for earning blurred, could even reverse and erase, sexual divisions of labour within peasant households and transformed "the configuration of roles within the family" and the

family's "social character". (26)

The implication here is that, under certain circumstances, the cultural 'norms' of patriarchy were relatively insignificant in the daily circumstances of people's lives, measured against the more immediate pressures exerted by, for example, the material conditions of subsistence. Indeed, historians investigating the impact of structural factors on family behaviour have identified a number of influential variables, originating from a variety of sources, which informed daily life. In summarising their findings Anderson has described family behaviour as being influenced by:

... the family's resource generating potential (particularly its age/sex composition); by the mode of production in which the family is involved; by the income-generating relationships that are implied by that mode; by law and custom regarding property acquisition (including inheritance); by the possibility of access to alternative resource-generating activities (including wage labour or domestic manufacturing) or resource-providing rights (including, for example, both customary rights to pasture animals on common land and social welfare provision); by the intervention of powerful groups external to the family (landowners, employers and others with power in the



local community); by custom limiting the range of resource-generating options which individuals see as practically available at a point in time (for example, ideas over what is appropriate for women). (27)

Although recognition of the considerable diversity of reaction and experience viable within such structural constraints allows the possibility that practical circumstances could erode divisions of labour and undermine the exercise of patriarchy - and explains different degrees of conformity to patriarchal norms - it does not suggest that this was commonly the case. Indeed, identification of structural constraints on family behaviour returns us to the point made earlier, that social and economic organisation and culture/ideology are mutually reinforcing. For although criteria derived from cultural norms are only specifically identified in one of Anderson's categories above, they clearly permeate all the others. But while law and custom, property acquisition, resource providing rights and so forth directly sustain patriarchal norms, income generating relationships implied by modes of production do not inevitably do so. What is highlighted here, indeed, is the importance of immediate conditions and pragmatic considerations in determining the extent of adherence to prevailing

cultural norms. Whilst the ideals themselves might be disregarded, even rejected, the degree of conformity to those ideals within everyday behaviour is also prescribed by circumstances. As Joyce has commented,

sets of ideas interpreting and reinforcing the power of an elite cannot be separated from the social milieu in which they took form, it was in fact the milieu that mattered rather more than the ideals. (28)

Marx's well known comment regarding the contribution of people to history might be adapted to say that people make decisions about their lives, but not under circumstances of their own choosing. (29)

### The Sexual Division of Labour

The concept of gender divisions of labour has several elements, of which the following are the most significant to the support and continuance of patriarchy. (30) It involves a differentiation in task allocation, most notably the allocation of 'domestic' labour within the home to women. (31) It also involves differentiated access to levels of work, with the virtual exclusion of women from 'skilled' work locating them at the lower levels of labour hierarchies. It also encompasses differences in the value of 'men's work' and 'women's

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work', that is, 'value' defined both in the sense of cultural perceptions and in the Marxist sense of economic value. These elements are not discrete: they overlap, inform and reinforce each other - and in so doing they effectively translate difference into female dependency.

The preceding discussion highlighted the significance of sexual divisions of labour as a major element within the immediate milieux of people's lives, and raised the theoretical possibility that an elimination of such divisions could also, through the undermining of the material basis of patriarchy, dislodge it from its prominent position as a 'pivotal organising principle' of social organisation. Marx and Engels similarly suggested that this might be so, seeing the "reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry" as "the first premise for the emancipation of women".(32) Nonetheless, despite evidence of a considerable flexibility in task allocation over time, occupation and circumstance, variation in degrees of adherence to gender divisions of labour (ie. socially constructed divisions of labour) do not suggest any lessening of the significance of such divisions as a mainspring of patriarchy. Other issues apart, notions of a 'practical' and 'rough and ready' equality between

men and women derived from shared work and responsibilities stray dangerously close to assuming an inevitable symmetry between actual behaviour and evaluations of that behaviour that patently does not exist. In short, it is important clearly to recognise the interactive elements that are contained within the concept of gender divisions of labour and their significance in the support and continuance of male domination and female subordination. And here, because patriarchy simultaneously takes an economic and familial form, it is also important to employ a dual focus which encompasses the interactive relationship between divisions of labour within the family and in economic production.(33) Simply to contrast women's experiences of formal employment with those of men is to fall into the trap of assuming the male experience as the norm and thereby failing to recognise ways in which the experiences of women were fundamentally different.

The constant factor in women's lives, the 'bottom line' of their experience of work both paid and unpaid, has been the expectation that they would marry and have children. Their role within the family fundamentally defined women's work far beyond the immediate practical considerations of what could be 'fitted in' with the daily chores and



responsibilities, but defined every aspect of their lives from birth to death. Men were workers, women were the prospective, actual or former wives of workers - or were the mothers of workers. Women, therefore, were not perceived as workers as such but merely as quasi workers - and the social and economic 'rules of the game' were organised around this assumption.

Differences in task allocation between men and women (in both household labour and work in economic production) have frequently been understood as a straightforward consequence of physical differences between the sexes. The allocation of prime responsibility for not only child care but also washing, cleaning, cooking and so on to women, for example, has been directly attributed to their capacity to bear children. Similarly, their traditional association with the economic production and marketing of food, drink, textiles etc. and the casual, often informal nature of much of their income-generating work, has also been attributed to women's need to integrate economic activities with child care and household tasks. There are, however, a number of flaws and omissions in this argument which seriously undermine its explanatory usefulness. It does not explain, for example, why women without



children or other domestic ties have very similar experiences within the labour market to married women; it ignores the problems experienced by women 'fitting in' remunerative work with child care and housework; it does not question the low value placed on household labour and, perhaps most seriously, it fails to consider why sex-role reversal was apparently not seen as a viable option in rural industrial households in this country in the way it seems to have been done in Germany? (34)

The physical constraints imposed on women by child bearing were, in truth, considerable. Average complete family size before the late nineteenth century was smaller than is often supposed, at around 5 to 6.5 children, and child care was probably much less demanding than in the modern family.(35) Ignorance of effective contraception, however, meant that births were spread evenly over the whole fertile period and, between marriage and menopause, the choice for most women was, as McLaren has put it, either "an infant in the womb or at the breast".(36)

Nevertheless, though physical factors were clearly contributory to domestic divisions of labour, they still do not adequately explain them. Nor is the notion of female economic participation being limited to work that could 'conveniently' be combined with

household labour a convincing explanation of gender divisions in task allocation. Where work was located away from the domestic environment, as it frequently was even in pre-industrial England, differences in the pace as well as location of work prevented its easy integration with domestic responsibilities, but married women and those with children could and did work away from the home.(37) Moreover, the assumption that practical difficulties such as these are sufficient explanation for gender divisions of labour ignores the presence of similar difficulties within the domestic environment - where the remunerative work of women was taken for granted. Thus, for example, indications of a lack of attention to the needs of infant children suggest that the integration of domestic work with income generating employment was considerably less 'convenient' than has been supposed and this would have been particularly the case when erratic demand led to intense pressure on production.(38)

If full explanation of gender differences in task allocation is not easily identifiable in the family environment, examination of the issue from the complementary perspective of the labour market helps to locate further determinants and clarify issues. Here, the work of Sally Alexander and Christopher

Middleton (39) offers valuable analytical insights into the cumulative processes of differentiation whereby 'traditional' differences in work prompted by perceptions of the 'natural' attributes of men and women were exacerbated and hardened by changes in the mode of production and by technological innovations and an associated enhancement of 'men's work' and devaluation of 'women's work'.

Very simply, under capitalist organisation (classically where the owner of capital invests in the labour power of the propertyless worker) profit lies in the difference between the costs of production, particularly the cost of labour, and the value added to the product in the course of the labour process. Profits are increased, therefore, where the productivity of labour increases relative to costs, that is, where labour is most efficiently utilised. How this is achieved varies historically but it necessarily involves technical divisions of labour. Where production has a handicraft base, labourers perform different, partial functions, some of which are skilled, some unskilled. While the skill-based hierarchy of labour power that existed under manufacture was eroded by capitalism and industrialisation, however, the economic advantages afforded both to capital and to valued workers by



labour hierarchies ensured their continuance. Thus, manipulation of competition between workers enabled greater exploitation of their labour, the co-operation of valued workers was encouraged by their enhanced relative position, and the vulnerability of those lower down the scale enabled employers to pay low wages and hire and fire at will. The differences between workers upon which such hierarchies are based may have foundations of skills, both real and contrived, and/or they may be socially constructed and/or based on ascriptive criteria such as those implied by race or gender. Whatever the criteria used to define such hierarchies, however, they were (and often still are) characterised by the apparently inevitable absence of women from the privileged ranks of valued workers. Ascriptive criteria and domestic divisions of labour are clearly significant here, but issues of how 'skills' are acquired and defined and workers become specialists within particular areas are also very relevant.

As the term implies, occupational specialisation allows workers to concentrate on specific tasks and reduce the range of work undertaken. It is also normally associated with the acquisition of prestigious skills, with an occupational identity, with opportunities for decision making related to the

work in hand and with material rewards.(40) Entrance to the privileged ranks of 'skilled' specialists is not, however, solely determined by training or individual capacity to perform the work in question, nor is it simply limited by relatively straightforward constraints of time and location such as those imposed by domestic responsibilities. Ascriptive criteria, in this context criteria derived from gender-based assumptions, are also a determining factor. So, women might be excluded from specialist and/or 'skilled' occupations by virtue of an individual incapacity to do the work or by a perceived inability to do so derived from axiomatic assumptions about 'natural' abilities and roles. More subtly, gender-based perceptions also operate to define tasks as skilled or unskilled notwithstanding the actual nature of the task performed. Thus skills acquired and possessed by women can be viewed as less prestigious 'natural' attributes or may not be recognised as being skills, simply because they are practised by women. Conversely, gender-based assumptions can operate to elevate male work into the category of 'skilled' employment as when, for example, this is used to justify and support male authority over female workers.(41) Philips and Taylor have commented on these issues as follows:

the classification of women's jobs as unskilled and men's jobs as skilled or semi-skilled frequently bear no relation to the actual amount of training and ability required for them. Skill definitions are saturated with sexual bias. The work of women is often deemed inferior simply because it is women who do it. Women workers carry into the workplace their status as subordinate individual, and this status comes to define the value of the work they do. Far from being an objective economic fact, skill is often an ideological category imposed on certain types of work by virtue of the sex and power of the workers who perform it. (42)

The exclusion of women from skilled and/or specialised occupations has cumulative implications. The possession of valued skills can confer many advantages - not least the power of restriction exercised by associations of skilled workers which can limit entry to the trade or occupation to those who meet their criteria. In addition, occupational specialisation places limits on the work of non-specialists and, as specialisation increases, there is an inevitable increase in these limits.(43)

Women's lack of 'skills', therefore, confirms their 'natural' role within the family and largely confines them to work that has less 'value', is unpaid or poorly paid, routine, monotonous and often insecure.



A number of the points raised here can be illustrated by reference to the operation of gender division of labour in agricultural work. Both Middleton and Roberts have argued that demarcations between the work done by men and women in agriculture have very early origins, (44) and that changes in methods after the sixteenth century associated with capitalist farming and technological innovations increased both the intensity and the scale of these 'traditional' gender divisions of labour.

Middleton has argued, for example, that women's work in agriculture during the feudal period "differed hardly at all from that of men";

arrangements were generally flexible and sexually non-exclusive, and there is evidence of women being engaged in most male tasks - such as reaping, binding, mowing, carrying corn, shearing sheep, thatching , and breaking stones for road maintenance.... Women were hired to carry out the whole gamut of agricultural routines (45)

Certain tasks, however, particularly those requiring physical strength, were defined as male tasks and Roberts has argued that the tendency for men to be employed to use the heavier implements "can be detected at the earliest stage of agricultural development".(46) He attributes the male domination

of mowing, for example, primarily to physical factors of strength and stature which allowed men to monopolise the scythe and quotes a number of seventeenth-century sources which differentiated between men's and women's work according to physical criteria. Mowing was a suitable occupation for men because it "constantly pulls forth a whole man's strength", while women were often incapacitated by

the inconvenience that attend and follow the big-belly, weakening the strength of the female for some interval of time, and hindering them to labour as formerly.(47)

But physical factors alone cannot explain why the scythe became an exclusively male implement, for women carried out many other laborious tasks which equally required physical strength (48) and, as Roberts points out, a complex interplay of other factors also contributed to gender divisions of labour in agricultural work. Axiomatic assumptions about the relative 'weakness' of women may well have been derived from the teaching of the Church and from the Bible as much as from tangible evidence of women's physical capacities - though it is possible that such assumptions influenced action rather more often when they coincided with economic convenience - (49) and the time necessary to acquire the skills

required for scything probably excluded women from this area of work as much as anything. Although the "ablest" women were occasionally employed at men's work (50) their perceived weakness and the assumption that they would periodically be unavailable for such work disqualified women from learning the skills of mowing. Their scarcity value meant that male mowers were rewarded with higher wages and more secure employment and so differentials between the work of women and men increased. Women were useful as cheap labour and as 'reserve' workers, (51) but it is clear that the effect of the male monopoly of the corn scythe "was gradually to push women into less well paid jobs as followers and rakers", and to increase differences in kind between the harvest work of men and women. (52)

This is not to suggest that women's work in agriculture was unimportant or that they were excluded from 'skilled' agricultural work altogether. Snell has pointed to an abundance of supportive evidence for "a very wide range of female participation in agricultural tasks" before the mid eighteenth century, (53) and skilled work in the dairy was exclusively the work of women before the later eighteenth century - despite the physical strength and stamina required for this work. (54)



Nevertheless, the agricultural work of women was differentiated from that of men in terms of task allocation and of value. Female farm servants, for example, like farmers' wives and daughters combined agricultural with domestic work, women's access to skilled work was limited and, partly because of this and partly because of gender differentials in wage rates, women's earnings from agricultural work were less than those of men. (55) Further, although such evidence must be treated with considerable caution, differences in the terms employed to describe the work of men and women do suggest considerable gender-based differentiation in the way their work was perceived. Male famuli on the feudal estates were given occupational titles such as shepherd or ploughman, for example, but female famulae were called by the general title of 'servants' irrespective of occupation. (56) And the description of the work of farmers' wives in the dairy and with the poultry and the pigs as 'pin money' labour hardly reflects the expectation that such work would provide much of the household food and clothing. (57) Far from introducing gender divisions of labour in agricultural work, as Snell appears to suggest, (58) changes associated with the intensification of capitalist farming in the mid eighteenth century

built on a firm foundation of pre-existing differentiation which limited and undervalued the work of women as a matter of course.

The picture of women's involvement in guild regulated crafts and trades is less clear, with the marital status of women, common law and local custom, and local conditions of trade and employment giving rise to a whole variety of practices that nicely illustrate Power's differentiation between the legal position of women and the theory and practice of their social and economic roles.(58) What seems clear is that a distinction needs to be made between the formal possibilities of what women could do and the actualities of their involvement in economically productive activities, with a recognition of factors and conditions conducive to the application or erosion of gender divisions of labour.

Single women were legally defined as femme sole and suffered no obvious legal constraints on their economic activity under common law. They could be apprenticed as girls under the same conditions and in the same trades as boys, they could work as journeywomen, and, as mistresses of their craft, could train apprentices of either sex. The legal identity of a married woman on the other hand was merged with that of her husband and, as femme covert,

she was unable to make independent contracts or to own property. In practice, however, borough custom could over ride common law and, subject to her husband's permission, a married woman could own property and trade in her own right.(59) It was possible, therefore, for women to have an independent existence as workers even after marriage.(60) Women could be members of a guild, (61) they could be mistress of a business and they could carry on their husband's business after his death "as a matter of course".(62) All this was possible, but it was not very likely. Women do not seem to have been admitted as full members of the guilds; they rarely held guild office and did not participate in making guild regulations.(63) Many of the more specialised crafts admitted women only if they were the wives or daughters of masters, and there were no all-women craft guilds in England as there were in France and Italy.(64) In a wide range of locations surveyed by Roberts, in the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, the proportion of female apprentices rarely exceeded 10 per cent of the total, and many of these were apprenticed to the 'trade' of 'housewifery'.(65) In short, a range of formal and informal barriers operated to constrain the participation of women in business and trade.



Local conditions of trade and employment offer the most immediate explanation for variations in the application of gender divisions of labour, with town and guild regulations variously excluding or welcoming women into the trade according to booms or slumps and varying conditions in the labour market. In Bristol, for example, a decline in trade and male unemployment amongst weavers in 1461 led to restrictions on female employment with weavers being forbidden to employ women other than those already working in the trade. Two years later, presumably when conditions had improved, women were encouraged to "help and labour with hair housband for thair boath sustynaunce and thair children thair encrease".(66) Again, women represented a reserve supply of workers, to be utilised when it was economically convenient to do so. But as 'reserve' workers they also represented a potential threat to the male workforce, with a concomitant necessity for control over their access to skills training and their participation in economic activities.

The operation of constraints can most clearly be seen in the case of single women, as even they were not generally accorded full status as a member of the productive labour force despite their legal position as femme sole. Indeed, Prior has argued that the

legal independence of single women in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Oxford caused them to be considered as a threat to the guild system - 'reserve' workers can all too easily become competitors for work - and she concluded that "there was no place in early modern society any more than in mediaeval society for the single independent woman". (67) Evidence is limited, but the suggestion that the single woman who worked for pay was perceived to be 'redundant', either because she could not be absorbed into the work of her family of birth or because she could not find a husband, cannot be dismissed. Hutton suggests, for example, that many of the single women who made a "meagre" profit by buying and reselling food originated outside Shrewsbury and had possibly come to the town "to try their luck" because "they had been unable to marry in their native village", (68) and she denies the suggestion of any 'rough and ready equality' between men and women working in fourteenth-century Shrewsbury. She concluded,

As far as it has been possible to tell..., there was certainly no 'rough and ready equality' between men and women working in fourteenth-century Shrewsbury ... In fact, a clear sexual division of labour can be seen in operation. Women were only to be

found working in certain occupations, mainly those closely associated with domestic labour, such as the preliminary stages of the textile industry, brewing, petty retailing, and, of course, domestic service. While there is no concrete evidence that women were actively excluded from the heavy crafts ...they certainly did not participate actively in such industries ... They played little or no part in the more prestigious and profitable occupations, thus being forced into the lesser paid and low status jobs.

Furthermore, even if women did help out in certain crafts they were never accorded equal status with their male counterparts, at least as far as the civic authorities were concerned. (69)

That the work of women was seen essentially as a supplement to that of their husbands' is nicely illustrated by the wording of the will of Thomas Reade who died in 1660. He left all his (sic) property to his wife in appreciation of "her joint care, travell and industry (that) hath supported and augmented mine estate". (70) (emphasis added) Roberts has also pointed out, citing evidence from Elizabethan Norwich, that the occupational designations of women were merged with their marital status, and that "record keepers persisted in assuming that women merely 'did' various kinds of

work whereas their husbands were identified by them", (71) and he concluded that the multitude of activities that women undertook were primarily viewed as "the social obligations of a wife, rather than as the 'occupation' of a married woman." (72)

The belief that the woman was the 'weaker vessel' not only contributed to ascriptive criteria in respect of female capabilities, but also operated to define the work she did as her 'duty' rather than 'work' per se. Women were not only physically weak, they were also morally weak; work was the curse laid upon Adam by God in punishment for his sin of eating the apple, but it was Eve who had caused Adam's fall from grace and part of the curse laid upon her was a duty of obedience to her husband in all things. So, though "huswives affaires have never an end" this was just retribution for Eve's sins - and a useful way of keeping weak women from straying into further temptation. (73)

The role of the pre-industrial wife may have been palpable but this was not reflected in popular perceptions of women's work. In cultural terms and in economic terms the work of women had less 'value' than that of men despite the manifest importance of women's contribution to all areas of production. Without socially recognised skills, obliged to 'fit



in' productive work around their work in the family, generally excluded from the workshop trades and the "corporate, collectivist and solidarist idioms" (74) of the skilled male workers and confined to the unskilled, unorganised branches of production, yet with an awareness of the importance of their contribution to the household economy, women were vulnerable to exploitation. And it was this vulnerability, as Berg has recognised, which made women's labour "such a lucrative source of profit in the early stages of industrialisation" (75) and proto-industrial domestic manufacture.

In the organisation of domestic production, capital operated essentially as merchant capital or proto-capital with little or no direct intervention in the organisation of the labour process. Local conditions of labour and employment, therefore, interacted with economic production to produce a variety of arrangements with greater or lesser adherence to traditional gender divisions of labour within the family. (76) Where the whole family was engaged in domestic production distinctions between the work of men and women (and between their economic functions of production and reproduction) were readily blurred - particularly as the irregular pace of much production meant periods of intense activity

alternated with periods of relative leisure. Nevertheless, though men and women might share household and productive work as equally contributing partners in a joint enterprise, the concept of patriarchal authority was still enshrined in law and custom and was upheld by the managerial authority generally exercised by the male 'head' of the household and by the custom of paying the family earnings to him.(77) Further, though the work of women and children in proto-industrial cottage industry was probably more intensive and extensive than formerly, the work performed was not adequately compensated. Women (and children) were a readily available source of cheap labour for merchant manufacturers and as Berg says, "the larger proportion of the labour time of these women went to merchant capitalists in the form of extra profit" (78) rather than into the family budget of domestic workers.

Wherever they worked, at home as domestic workers or in the workshops or the factories, the employment of women increased profits. Briefly, while lack of training and/or 'skills' and limited employment opportunities also contributed to the cheapness of female labour, their social position also enabled employers to pay them less. For while it could be

assumed, as patriarchal ideology did assume, that their earnings were essentially supplementary to those of their husbands and fathers, the wages paid to them could safely be at a level below subsistence. Conversely, when women (and children) were employed, male wages could be assumed to be supplemented, with the combined earnings of family members providing sufficient for family subsistence - thus providing the employer with the productive value of their combined labour at proportionally cheaper rates. (79)

The employment of women also enhanced present and future profitability in other ways, particularly where their cheap labour eroded the skills base of manufacture that allowed skilled craftsmen to protect their independence against the encroachment of capitalist organisation. For where an unskilled woman, or a machine tended by a woman or child could do the job just as effectively, the skills of the craftsman were effectively devalued. And the presence of a large reservoir of cheap and unskilled workers intensifies competition for work and provides the flexible workforce necessary for the accumulation of capital. Industrial capitalism was thus marked by the exploitation of women as a cheap source of labour, both in the factories and in domestic and 'sweated' production, and as a means of wresting

control over the labour process from the male workforce.

The development of mechanised production also introduced a new element into the gender division of labour by the erosion of the material base for the traditional, male dominated, hierarchy of labour. Recognising that increased use of machinery would dispense with the need for the strength and skill that allowed adult male domination of manufacture, Marx argued that

Modern industry, by assigning as it does an important part in the process of production, outside the domestic sphere, to women, to young persons, and to children of both sexes, creates a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and relations between the sexes.(80)

Engels also argued that

since large scale industry has transformed the woman from the house to the labour market and the factory and makes her, often enough, the breadwinner of the family, the last remnants of male domination in the proletarian home have lost all foundation.(81)

Marx also assumed, however, that 'traditional habit' would influence the division of labour and what he called "natural differences of age and sex" would



replace skill-based labour hierarchies.(82) In other words, that hierarchical relationships in which women, children and younger men are subordinated to older men, constituted a 'cultural pre-condition' which would be 'transported' to new systems for the organisation of labour and production.

The course and development of the struggle that ensued in cotton manufacture in Lancashire is explored in detail in chapters 3 and 6, where the impact of changes in the organisation of agricultural production in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on family/gender roles is also considered, but two theoretical concepts, the concept of the male breadwinner wage and the concept of ideological hegemony, are briefly examined here as a preliminary to that discussion.

### The Breadwinner Wage

To consider first of all the concept of the male breadwinner wage. Historically, this idea, that the earnings of a male worker should be sufficient to provide for the upkeep of a dependent wife and children, developed as part of the defence mounted by workers of their 'traditional' rights and status as 'honourable' men.(83) At the immediate level the

development of this new form of wages (individual wage payments) and new subsistence norm (84) can be seen as a factor of the gradual transformation of the processes of wage bargaining within the nineteenth century free capitalist economy, wherein the principle of 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay' and customary hierarchies of wage rates began to be replaced by new 'rules of the game', principally the rule of 'what the market would bear'. (85) At a deeper level the demand for a male breadwinner wage can also be understood as a defence of working-class cultural values threatened by the organisation of factory labour and as a re-assertion of the values of patriarchy as an organising principle of the social relations of production in a new and developed form more appropriate - as labour perceived the case - to changed conditions of production. The male breadwinner wage represented, as Seccombe has described it, "a powerful ideological fixture in the labour movement" which expressed working-class cultural values in a form which could be employed as a very effective weapon in the struggle over wages.

Working men could motivate their demands for higher wages in terms which the propertied classes found morally unassailable. They could say, in effect: 'if we were decently paid, our wives could

remain at home and become good homemakers (just like your wives), and our children could stay at school and get a good education (just like your children)'. By the values the propertied classes held dear, these were wholly honourable goals; they were nevertheless jeopardized by the anarchic working of capitalism. In highlighting the discrepancy, unions put employers on the defensive and condemned the operation of the free labour market by the criterion of a higher value - the sanctity of the family - shared by all social classes.(86)

The concept of hegemony provides an explanatory framework in which this argument can be located. For in the crisis of authority which developed in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it was necessary for the state to intervene in civil society to re-establish social harmony and order threatened by social and economic changes associated with industrialisation and urbanisation by securing the consent of the working classes to dominant cultural norms. The securing of this consent may be pursued in several ways; by methods of direct repression (such as those described by E.P.Thompson, (87) or by softer forms of legitimation (such as the use of education to transmit cultural messages) and by labelling 'deviant' cultural practices (such as

the factory employment of women) as social problems in order to create moral panics and underwrite the crisis of authority.(88)

Historically, the establishment of bourgeois cultural values as the dominant norms of nineteenth-century society was itself the product of conflict between competing political/cultural ideologies. (89) Further, these norms and ideologies were not derived from a simple correspondence between the economic base and the social/cultural superstructure but were rather the product of political/cultural ideologies informing the state - as a relatively autonomous sphere - of the reproductive conditions necessary for the maintenance of the social formation.(90) Thus the pursuit of hegemony was not a straightforward process of ideological imposition but was a continuing process of tension, conflict and negotiation across a variety of sites. What the male breadwinner wage represents, therefore, is an ideological concept wherein the competing interests of the skilled male workforce and of their employers could be incorporated within the dominant culture of the bourgeoisie towards the achievement of hegemony - and of social order. In crude terms, it represents the bargain that was struck between powerful groups with the payment of a breadwinner wage to skilled workmen



to cement the deal.

The deal that was struck also embodied the development of a 'new' family form, with re-defined divisions of labour between men and women accommodating the interests of the skilled male workforce and the needs of capital. Within this 'ideal' family form, the wife 'naturally' took responsibility for day-to-day and generational reproduction and for consumption in the private family sphere, while the husband, equally 'naturally', took responsibility for the financial support of his family through his labour in the public sphere of production. For capital, the immediate benefits of women's cheap labour were traded off against the longer term advantages of a more effective reproduction of the labour force and the enhanced reliability that responsibility for family support engendered amongst skilled workers. For the male worker, the responsibility of supporting his family was compensated by the elimination of potential cheap competition in the workplace, enhancement of his patriarchal authority within the family and the full-time services of his wife at home. There were, in the context of nineteenth-century labour market conditions, advantages in this family organisation for women. There were also

considerable disadvantages, not least the fact that the work of women within the home is not recognised as contributing to production, therefore it does not 'earn' a wage. As Seccombe has argued,

What is concealed in the fully capitalist wage form is the private domestic labour of proletarian subsistence. No wage is paid for this labour, and it is therefore difficult to take it seriously as real work, lacking as it does the general signifier of work in a capitalist society: the wage. It appears as a natural service, a simple act of caring, a labour of love, with all the attendant mystification that this involves. The worker whose primary responsibility it is to perform this job is economically dependent on the breadwinner for access to the means for her own subsistence. Her housekeeping allowance enters the household in the husband's pocket, and her own work earns her nothing in the way of an independent subsistence fund to spend as she wishes.

Two labours, conducted at two separate sites, are indispensable to proletarian existence; but in the wage form only one of them is recognised, only one is rewarded with payment, only one entitles its 'earner' to possess and spend this payment as his own". (original emphasis) (91)

The male breadwinner wage was not, in reality, a realisable ideal for those male workers below the

level of skilled and unionised labour - and must have been a bitter irony to those women struggling to support families on so-called 'supplementary' wages. In this sense, therefore, the male breadwinner wage was a doubly divisive concept, splitting the interests of the working woman from those of men and dividing the unskilled, unorganised workforce from the skilled 'aristocrats' of the labour market.(92) Nevertheless, the concept still exerted considerable hegemonic force as an aspirational ideal, and, because it facilitated the integration of the goals of the powerful members of the working classes with those of the dominant social and economic groups, the payment of a breadwinner wage to groups of skilled workers was an effective means to hegemonic ends.

It was not the male breadwinner wage as such, however, which was the cornerstone of the accommodation between the state, the capitalist employers and the working classes that was broadly achieved in the post 1850 period, but the re-affirmation of the values and practices of patriarchy within the family and the workplace through the acceptance of a broad consensus that the retention of male authority, gender divisions of labour and female dependence upon males served the interests of all.

## Conclusions

In defining my understanding of the concept of patriarchy and the operation of gender divisions of labour, the chapter has set out some of the key points of the thesis developed in this study. It has argued that patriarchy constituted a 'pivotal principle' of social and economic organisation, manifested and sustained by the operation of cultural norms and structural constraints which differentiated between the nature and level of tasks thought appropriate to men and women, denied the value of women's economically productive and domestic labour, and assumed and reinforced the 'natural' dependence of women and the authority of men.

Gender divisions of labour, however, could be a two-edged sword, and the chapter has identified some potential conflicts between the economic interests of capitalism and the operation and application of patriarchy, with a concomitant need to exert control over the work of women as cheap competition in the labour market. These tensions were to come to the fore with the onset of industrial capitalism, with the erosion of the skills-base of male worker control over the organisation of labour and production and, therefore, also an erosion of the material base of



patriarchy itself, leading to a serious disjunction between the 'traditional' values of the family and the organisation of economic production.

The erosion of the 'cultural superstructure' of patriarchy was thus integral to the political and industrial conflicts which characterised the early decades of the nineteenth century. Conversely, its reconstitution as a fundamental principle of social organisation was also integral to their resolution. The reconstitution of the essential elements of patriarchy (male authority and female dependence supported and sustained by gender divisions of labour) thus represented a model framework for the harmonious integration of cultural values and economic organisation under capitalism, and the successful achievement of hegemony. And the reconstitution of gender divisions of labour via direct and indirect forms of control and coercion (including schooling) represented the means by which this was to be achieved. The course of these conflicts and the processes of their resolution remain to be explored in the following chapters.

## Notes

1. As Alexander has said, "feminist historians hesitate to make generalisations about women of any class, married or single, in any historical period. Research so far reveals a bewildering range of experience in working, political, and domestic life for nineteenth-century British women, and at the same time suggests there is more to follow". Alexander et al op.cit., p.175.
2. Thompson, E.P. The Making of the English Working Class, Harmondsworth, 1968, p.11.
3. Neale, R.S., Class in English Society, Oxford, 1981, p.194.
4. See, for example, Beechey, V. 'On Patriarchy', Feminist Review, 3, 1979; Sargent, L. (ed.), The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: a Debate on Class and Patriarchy, London, 1981; Lown, J., op.cit..
5. Lown, op.cit., p. 28.
6. Beechey, op.cit., p.79.
7. Lown, ibid.
8. Hartmann, H. 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union'. in Sargent, op.cit., p. 18.
9. Hartmann in Sargent, op.cit., p. 371.
10. Hartmann, op.cit., p.19.
11. Lown, op.cit., p. 29.
12. Lown has argued that the assumption that the location of the "original causes" of male dominance is of prime importance in tracing links between a pre-defined system of class and the persistence of unequal gender relations inevitably leads to a search for the sources of male dominance outside the social relations between men and women themselves. Lown, op.cit., p. 28.
13. Anderson, M., Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500-1914, London 1980, p.78
14. Thompson, op.cit., p.10.

15. Tosh, J. The Pursuit of History, Essex, 1984, p.144.
16. Gintis, H., and Bowles, S., 'Contradictions and Reproduction in Educational Theory', in Cole, M., (ed.) Bowles and Gintis Revisited: Correspondence and Contradiction in Educational Theory, Lewes, 1988, p.20.
17. Apple, M. 'Facing the Complexities of Power' in Cole (ed.) op.cit, p.125
18. Lown, op.cit., p.33.
19. Lown, op.cit., p.29.
20. Lown argues that paternalism ("a crucial means of rationalising the social order at different periods through the pre-industrial era"), became strongly associated with patriarchal domestic ideologies in the nineteenth century. Lown, op.cit, p.34. Joyce also gives considerable weight to the role of industrial paternalism in securing accomodation to the economic and social order of the mid nineteenth century. Joyce, P. op.cit. See my arguments about the role and nature of paternalist relations between workers and their employers in chapter 6.
21. Lown, op.cit., p.34-5; Dobash, R., and R., 'The Violent Event' in Whitelegg, E., et al (eds.), The Changing Experiences of Women, Oxford, 1982, p.190-206.24.
22. Joyce, op.cit., p.98.
23. See, for example, Seccombe's discussion of the prerogatives available to the working-class male 'breadwinner' and of local customs which evolved to protect female 'rights'. Seccombe, W., 'Patriarchy Stabilised: the Construction of the Male Breadwinner Wage Norm in Nineteenth-Century Britain', Social History, vol.11, no.1, January 1986, p.58.
24. Joyce, op.cit., p.92.
25. Postan, M. (ed.), Mediaeval Women, Cambridge, 1975, p.9. Stenton also argued that "a practical working equality" could exist between men and women in Norman society. Stenton, D.M., The Englishwoman in History, London, 1957, 1977 edition, p.29-30, 98.



26. Kreidte, P., Medick, H., and Schlumbohm, J., 'industrialisation before Industrialisation', cited by Houston, R. and Snell, K.D.M., 'Historiographical Review. Proto-industrialisation? Cottage Industry, Social Change and Industrial Revolution', Historical Journal, 27, 2, 1984, p.487.
27. Anderson, M., op.cit., p. 69.
28. Joyce, op.cit., 92-3.
29. "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past", cited by Meighan, R., A Sociology of Educating, London, 2nd. edition, 1986, p. 266. Lown, op.cit., p.33.
30. This section was suggested by Middleton's examination of elements within the concept of the sexual division of labour. Middleton, op.cit., p.186-188.
31. Segalen cites an interchangeability of tasks in breadmaking to suggest that sexual divisions of labour have been given an undue importance, even that the whole concept of 'domestic' work needs to be re-examined. Segalen, M., Love and Power in the Peasant Family, Oxford, 1984, p.96.
32. Marx, K., Capital volume 1, 1967 edition p.489-90, quoted by Beechey, ibid, p.131. Engels, F., The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, 1884, in ibid.
33. Lown, op.cit., p.33.
34. Middleton, op.cit., p.196. Clarke suggested that seventeenth-century men shared "a considerable proportion" of household chore, Clarke, op.cit., p.5. Scepticism is prompted not only by the lack of evidence given in support of this statement but also by modern research which suggests strongly that the 'sharing' of domestic chores still involves women spending considerably more time on them than men. See, for example, Land, H., 'Who Cares for the Family?' in Whitelegg et al, op.cit., p.362. Laslett gives one example (he calls it "an interesting surprise") of a labourer sharing domestic chores with his wife in the late eighteenth century. Laslett, P., op.cit. p.120



Nineteenth- and twentieth-century autobiography also suggests that men "were not expected to share in routine housework" though one autobiographer cited by Burnett mentions husbands contributing to domestic chores where their wives were in full-time paid employment, but only those taking place outside the home. Burnett, 1974, op.cit., p.219.

35. Anderson, op.cit., P.19, 59-60; Middleton, op.cit., p.199.
36. Mc.Laren, D., 'Marital Fertility and Lactation, 1570-1720', in Prior, M. (ed.), Women in English Society 1500-1800, London, 1985, p.22-6, 46.  
Middle-class families were limiting the size of families by the use of contraceptives from the late nineteenth century, but working-class couples were still employing unreliable methods such as abstinence, withdrawal and abortion until the early twentieth century. Bookes, D., 'Women and Reproduction 1860-1939', in Lewis, J. (ed.), Labour and Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family 1850-1914, Oxford, 1986, pp. 149-71.  
Wrigley has made a tentative suggestion, however, that contraceptive techniques were used in Colyton in Devon in the late seventeenth century. Laslett is of the opinion that lactation, rather than contraception, was responsible for a relatively small and constant English family size. Laslett, P., The World We Have Lost - further explored, London, 3rd. edition, 1983, p. 117-8.
37. Charles, L., Introduction to Charles and Duffin, op.cit., p.14-5. The impression is sometimes given that factory work introduced the requirement to work away from the home.
38. Middleton, op.cit., p.198-99.
39. Alexander, S., 'Women's Work in Nineteenth-Century London: A Study of the Years 1820-1850', in Mitchell and Oakley, op.cit., pp. 59-111.  
Middleton, op.cit., pp.181-206.
40. Middleton, op.cit., p.186-7.
41. Perhaps the best known example of this is the cotton spinners in the Lancashire cotton factories in the second half of the nineteenth century. See chapter 5 'Reformism and Respectability'. Friefield's discussion of the skills needed to operate the self-actor mules,

however, casts new light on the perception of the spinners as 'contrived aristocrats'. Friefield, M. 'Technological Change and the Self-Acting Mule: a Study of Skill and the Sexual Division of Labour', Social History, 11, 3, October 1983.

42. Phillips, A. and Taylor, B. 'Sex and Skill: Notes Towards a Feminist Economics', Feminist Review, 6, 1980, p.79.
43. Middleton, op.cit., p. 190.
44. Middleton, ibid; Roberts, M. 'Sickles and Scythes: Men's Work and Women's Work at Harvest Time', History Workshop, 7, Spring 1979, pp.3-28.
45. Middleton, C., 'The Sexual Division of Labour in Feudal England', New Left Review, CXIII-CXIV, 1979, cited by Snell, op.cit, p.52 note 32.
46. Roberts, 'Sickles', p.7.
47. quoted by ibid, p.7.
48. Hostettler, E., 'Gourlay Steel and the Sexual Division of Labour', History Workshop, 4, 1977, p.97.  
The sex of the individual also appears to obscure recognition of the degree of physical strength required for a task. John (ed.), op.cit., p.4.
- 49.. Roberts, 'Sickles', op.cit., p.11.
50. Henry Best, a Yorkshire farmer in the seventeenth century, wrote, "Wee have allwaye one man or else one of the ablest of the women, to abide on the mowe". Best, Rural Economy, 1641, p.36, quoted by Roberts, ibid, p.10.
51. Female harvesters using sickles were cheaper to employ and harvested wheat and rye until the eighteenth century and later. Roberts, ibid, p.16-7, 19.
52. Roberts, ibid, p.18. Dates of change varied regionally. See, for example, Hostettler, ibid.
53. Their work included reaping, loading and spreading dung, ploughing, threshing, thatching, following the harrow, and working as shepherdesses" Snell, op.cit., p.52.
54. Hours of work could be from 3 am. or 4 am. to late evening, and large cheeses, weighing up to

120 or 140 pounds had to be lifted. Dairy maids did this "with a degree of ease" which caused "surprise" to one observer. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.13-4.

55. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.16. Women reapers were paid at 50% - 90% the rate paid to male reapers between 1563 and 1685 in a number of counties surveyed by Roberts. Roberts, op.cit., p.19.

56. Middleton commented,  
while we may readily acknowledge that many women employed in this capacity would not have been mere household drudges, there is surely some significance in the fact that women were already more likely to be recruited into general rather than specialist occupations, and in the further fact that the label applied to most permanently waged female labourers referred to their subordinate status rather than to the nature of the tasks they performed in that role.

Middleton, 'Women's Labour', p.189.

57. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.8.

58. Snell, op.cit., p.50-1, 296. Snell gives a summary of arguments which suggest a more equitable involvement of women in guild related activities. Snell, op.cit., pp.273-276., 309. For a more 'pessimistic' interpretation see Alexander, op.cit., p.76. Snell suggests that  
"experiences of marked sexual divisions (of labour) became less apparent as one progressed down the social scale". Snell, op.cit., p. 272.

This may well have been so (though the argument is open to debate), but Snell appears to take evidence of female employment per se as evidence of non-differentiated opportunities, without recognising differences in the nature, level and 'value' of such work.

59. Snell, op.cit., pp.277, 294-5, 300-1; Borough custom could also impose additional constraints on women's work, and the real value of this right was undermined by a husband's continuing responsibility for contracts made by his wife. Prior, op.cit., p.102-3. See also Lacey for information about the theory and practice of law and custom in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century London. Lacey, K. 'Women and Work in Fourteenth and Fifteenth century London', in Charles and Duffin, op.cit., pp.24-82.



60. Lacey, op.cit., p.48; Snell, op.cit., p.298.
61. Only 5 of 500 English guilds excluded women. Lacey, ibid, p.57.
62. Snell, op.cit., p.298; Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.125.
63. Prior, op.cit., p. 96.
64. Lacey, op.cit., p. 46, 57.
65. Roberts, 'Images' op.cit., p.142, 171 note 108.
66. The stated justification for this limitation of women's work provides an illuminating example of how male 'skills' in one area could also be advantageous in other, unrelated areas.  
 Many and divers of the King's liege people, likely men to do the King's service in his wars and defence of this land and sufficiently learned in the said craft goeth vagrant and unoccupied and may not have their labour for their living.  
 Quoted by Power, Postan (Ed.), op.cit., p.61.
67. Prior, op.cit., p.110, 95-6.
68. Hutton, D. 'Women in Fourteenth-Century Shrewsbury', in Charles and Duffin (Eds.), op.cit., p.94. The validity of the suggestion is supported by evidence of rises and falls in the average age of female marriage in line with the employment opportunities available to them. Anderson, 'Family', op.cit., p.18; Anderson, M. 'Marriage Patterns in Victorian Britain', Journal of Family History, 1, 1976, p.9; Snell, op.cit., pp.53-4, 311, 349 n.78.
69. Hutton, op.cit., p.96.
70. Quoted by Wright, S. '"Churmaids, Huswyfes and Hucksters": The Employment of Women in Tudor and Stuart Salisbury' in Duffin and Charles, op.cit., p. 105.95.
71. Women were more commonly referred to by their marital status, though occasionally this was combined with an occupational designation to give titles such as 'tripe-wives' and 'herb-wives'. Roberts, ibid, p.141.
72. Roberts, ibid, p.144.



73. Genesis 3, verses 17-19.  
Obedience to a husband would also mean obedience to his judgements as to what constituted appropriate divisions of labour. Prior argues what she calls the 'Jack Sprat principle' of the division of labour between husband and wife; that is, where a husband chooses what he will do and the wife does the rest. Prior, op.cit., p.95. Middleton makes an interesting point in this context. He questions "why women were persistently expected to fill their spare moments with some industrious activity, whereas no comperable expectations were held of men" and goes on,  
in view of this it would appear that most histories of changing attitudes to work, especially those which depict the spread of a Protestant or similar 'work ethic' are probably inapplicable to women - another example of women's 'invisibility' in historical writing.  
Middleton, 'Women's Labour', pp.198, 206 note 39.
74. Berg, op.cit., p. 159.
75. Berg, ibid, p.175.
76. Though both Segalaen and Shorter suggest that 'rough music' or 'Charivari' used the weapon of public ridicule to enforce confomity to community values and customary ways. Thus, Segalen argued, "the rituals of charivari express social control over the husband who has not been able to instil proper respect for the model of male superiority". Segalen, op.cit., p.157, 41-9. Shorter also argues that French men who did 'women's work' were "regularly" abused by charivari. Shorter, E., The Making of the Modern Family, London, 1976, p.65, 222. Similarly, Prior suggests that English men who did 'women's work' were mocked as 'cot-queans' and called effeminate. Prior, op.cit., p. 96.
77. This 'family wage', however, did recognise the economic contribution of the wife and other family members. Seecombe, op.cit., p.61; Alexander, op.cit., p.77.
78. Berg, op.cit., pp.135-7.79.
79. This discussion leans heavily on Beechey's arguments. Beechey, V., 'Women and Production: A Critical Analysis of some Sociological Theories

- of Women's Work', in Dale, R., Esland, G., Freguson, R., and Mc.Donald, M., Politics, Patriarchy and Practice, Volume 2 of 'Education and the State', Sussex, 1981, pp.115-140.
80. Marx, K., Capital volume 1, 1967 edition, p.489-90, quoted by Beechey, ibid, p.131;
  81. Engels, F. The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, 1884, in ibid.
  82. ibid.
  83. Alexander argues that for male workers, "their status as fathers and heads of families was indelibly associated with their independence through 'honourable' labour and property in skill, which identification with a trade gave them". Alexander, S. 'Women, Class and Sexual Differences in the 1830s and 1840s: Some Reflections on the Writing of a Feminist History', History Workshop, 17, Spring, 1984, p.137.
  84. Seccombe, op.cit., p.55.
  85. Hobsbawm, E. 'Custom, Wages and Workload', Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour, 1968 edition, p. 345; Seccombe, ibid, p.53.
  86. Seccombe, ibid, p.55.
  87. See, for example, chapters 14 and 15 of Thompson, E.P., op.cit.
  88. Mc.Donald, P. 'Historical School Reform' in Cole, M. (ed.), op.cit., p.107.
  89. Perkin, H., The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1850, London, 1969, 1972 edition, pp.273-339.
  90. Mc.Donald, ibid; Hall, C. 'The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology' in Burman, S. (ed.) Fit Work for Women, Beckenham, 1979, pp.15-32.
  91. Seccombe, ibid, p.57.
  92. ibid, p.68.

The World Turned Upside Down? women's work and family  
life in the early nineteenth century

The intention in this chapter is to consider changes in the working lives and social roles of women and girls from the lower socio-economic ranks during this period of fundamental economic and social transformation. It continues the theme of patriarchy as a basic and pivotal organising principle and further develops it through consideration of geographical, occupational and social variations in responses to economic and technological developments and associated social adjustments during the period.

Several major lines of inquiry are pursued. Developments in agricultural production in Norfolk and Suffolk and in cotton textile production in Lancashire are outlined to identify changes in the patterns and extent of women's participation in economic production during the period. At the same time a 'dual focus' is employed to trace the inter-connections between the social organisation of family life and the organisation of labour in economic production; that is, the various ways in which gender divisions of labour within the family and in paid employment were defined and maintained by each other.

Secondly, the chapter identifies some of the causal factors underlying changing attitudes towards the

work of women which became widely apparent later in the century. This identification is approached through exploration of the tensions generated by the 'pushes' and 'pulls' of capitalist interests against workers' perceptions of their particular interests and contemporary fears of social upheaval and disorder.

The time period examined in the chapter concentrates on the early decades of the nineteenth century but also extends backwards into the later decades of the eighteenth to consider major changes in agriculture and industry which occurred at that time. The wide ranging content of the chapter makes the cut off point more problematic. The concepts of continuity and change lie at the heart of this chapter; the retention and adaptation of traditional values and behaviours in response to change in economic organisation, in social structures, in attitudes and ideals and in the every day experiences of work and family life. There is not, therefore, any clear and obvious point at which it confidently can be said that the 'new' industrial class society had replaced the 'old' order.

While chronological parameters must necessarily remain flexible, however, the events of the 1830s - the 1832 Reform Act and the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, anti-Poor law agitation and the rise of Chartism



- supports the choice of the later 1830s as marking the period when 'traditional' values and expectations increasingly gave way to the 'new' values of Victorian England.(1) This periodisation is not without its problems; it cuts across key developments in the cotton industry and imposes a somewhat artificial barrier between historical events and human responses which do not fall into neat separate compartments convenient to the historian. Ultimately, however, the decision rests on developments in the two areas central to the study: those of education and gender divisions and, as I shall argue, the period of the mid to late 1830s marks a general shift in attitudes and policies in line with altered socio-economic conditions in both rural East Anglia and the textile regions of industrial Lancashire. This chapter ends then in the later 1830s with chapter 5 picking up the loose threads inevitably left dangling here. It begins with developments in textile production in the North of England and it is to these that I now turn.

## Change and Continuity in Cotton Textile Production in the Early Nineteenth Century

The spectacular nature of the transformation of textile production during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and associated contemporary outbursts against the rise of the 'factory girl', might convey the impression that there was a sudden, complete and relatively straightforward change in women's work in textiles during the period.(2) But although the relocation of wool and woollen cloth production to Yorkshire did precipitate relatively abrupt changes in the economically productive work of many women in East Anglia and the South-West, and despite the appearance of the Northern factory girl as a novel and somewhat startling figure on the nineteenth-century social landscape, the transition to industrial capitalism was marked by far more complex changes vis a vis the lives of working women than this simple model suggests. Technological change and factory production was one aspect of industrial capitalism but profits could also be increased and capital expanded by using cheap labour more extensively and intensively.(3) An intensified system of domestic production (sweating, outwork) also developed alongside the factories, and the thousands of women and children who laboured in

these sectors were equally a part of the revolution in production. The time scale of change was far more protracted than the usual dates of demarcation for the 'Industrial Revolution' normally suggest, with the organisation of labour in proto-industrial production foreshadowing its organisation in capitalist industrial production.(4) And, most importantly, the organisation of labour under industrial capitalism involved more than a straightforward imposition of changing employment conditions on a passive labour force as the economic needs of capitalism dictated, but developed via a complex interaction between cultural values and economic forces and through relations of coercion, resistance and negotiation between employers and employees and between men and women.(5) Machinery diminished the immediate significance of muscle power and 'skills', but these remained sufficiently important to provide a bargaining tool with which sections of the male workforce could protect their position against the encroachments of 'unskilled' and female workers. Nor did machinery eliminate the so-called 'natural' differences between the sexes, and though gender divisions of labour provided manufacturers with a reserve pool of cheap feminine labour with which to resist the defensive combinations of workers in some trades, they also

operated to protect the 'skilled' status of other sections of the male workforce through the application of gender social relations to the organisation of labour.(6)

The eighteenth century female worker in the woollen industry was most commonly a spinner, though considerable numbers were also employed in the "less important" finishing processes (7) and "inferior people, women and children" (8) did the unpleasant job of picking. Erosion of apprenticeship regulations during the century, however, meant that though weaving was still defined as a man's trade, "it was not uncommon for women to earn their living in that way" either assisting on the family broad loom or as an independent wage earners in a workshop.(9)

Cotton production, which rapidly increased in importance after mid century to become the leading textile trade, maintained the traditional divisions of labour of domestic organisation with men being the weavers and organisers of production, and women and children undertaking the preparatory tasks and spinning. According to Ure,

The workshop of the weaver was a rural cottage ... The cotton wool which was to form his weft was picked clean by the fingers of his younger children, and was carded and spun by the older ones assisted



by his wife, and the yarn was woven himself assisted by his sons. When he could not procure within his family a supply of yarn adequate to the demands of his loom, he had recourse to the spinsters of the neighbourhood. One good weaver could keep three active women at work upon the wheel spinning weft.(10)

Domestic spinning was a relatively cheap and profitable way to produce yarn; the importance of spinning labour was not reflected in the wages paid and female spinners were among the lowest paid of workers, generally earning far less than, for example, male agricultural labourers.(11) The need for Ure's weaver to utilise the output of three active women, however, illustrates the inability of the spinners to keep pace with the demand for yarn, and it was this production bottleneck which largely encouraged the application of technology to spinning.(12) One of the earliest of the successful technological innovations was Hargreaves' spinning jenny, patented in 1770, but because their smallness and cheapness allowed them to be used in the cottages, the early jennies expanded output without necessitating any change in the organisation of production. It was the gradual introduction of larger jennies, the development of Arkwright's frame for the production of strong warp thread after 1769, and of

Crompton's mule after the 1780s, and the increased importance of water and steam power towards the end of the century that marked the change to factory production of yarn.

The immediate impact of the change from domestic spinning to factory based machine production was two-fold. The geographically localised nature of both cotton and wool production meant that although women in the immediate vicinity of the factories could find alternative work, even higher wages, as jenny spinners in the factories (that is, if their domestic commitments allowed), many thousands of women lost their traditional by-employment and source of income. Even where domestic spinning on the wheel or the jenny survived, it did so in competition with machinery and more intensive work was necessary to earn lower wages. Factory spinning wages for women also suffered from an influx of labour and began to decline as early as 1780.(13) But though the cheapness of female labour possibly inhibited the spread of the large jennies and hand mules, (14) the most significant change associated with the move to factory production of yarn on these large machines was the substitution of male labour for female.

Pinchbeck explained this substitution and summed up changes in the gender division of labour in spinning in simple terms. She argued that,

Heavier machines required the strength of men, and spinning on the mule quickly became highly skilled work monopolised by a new class of men spinners. Thus, within the space of a generation, what had been women's hereditary occupation was radically changed, and the only class of women spinners left were the unskilled workers in the new factories built to house Arkwright's frames.(15)

But this conclusion is misleading and the explanation of male dominance inadequate. It is misleading because a minority of women did continue as skilled spinners on the small mules in the first two decades of the nineteenth century and their numbers increased during the following decade.(16) And the explanation in terms of physical strength is inadequate because male dominance stemmed from a number of inter-connected causal factors which operated with varying significance over time. In the early stages of technological development the physical strength required to operate the larger jennies and manually operated mules did place a premium on male muscle power. Even after the application of power to the mules the machines did not operate automatically and considerable strength and stamina was still required.(17) Nevertheless, though physical differences of strength, whether actual or perceived, did contribute to this

definition of spinning as a job more suited to men, (18) women could and did work these larger machines in the factories.

Considerable technical skill was also required to operate and maintain the power mules as the spinner had simultaneously to co-ordinate three operations "in a display of skill and judgement", and "the spinning mule still required the continued attendance of a skilled operative".(19) Men were able to develop the operational and maintenance skills required for the new machines in the early domestic phase of development, but though few women would have had access to the substantial amount of capital required to purchase or rent the machines, women could, and did, acquire the necessary technical skills.(20) Definitions of 'skill' and status, however, also involve subjective judgements about the relative 'natural' attributes of the workers concerned, and the full explanation of the definition of factory spinning as a highly skilled and well paid occupation for men lies in the transmission of the social relations of the working-class family to the social organisation of labour within the cotton factory. The early organisation of the spinning factories supported and sustained family relations in a number of ways; by employing whole families, by paying family earnings to the male 'head' of the family, and



by conferring supervisory and 'paternal' authority on the male spinners.(21) As the spinning machines became more complex a sub-contracting system developed wherein the spinner directly employed several assistants (piecers), often his wife or children, paying for this out of his own piece rate earnings.(22) It was this supervisory role, "carried over from his social position in the family which suited the adult male to the job of mule spinning", (23) and it was the control over recruitment to the ranks of the spinners that confirmed and consolidated the spinners' well paid and skilled status. Women spinners also recruited their own piecers, using coaxing and rewards to encourage them to maximum output rather than the 'lickings' the men employed, but although they did their work "as well as men", they lacked the 'natural' paternal authority of the male spinners and did not share their high status.(24)

While spinning became a factory employment dominated by men, weaving became the major area of female factory employment. As Pinchbeck put it, the "machines brought about an occupational interchange; spinning became a skilled occupation for men and weaving absorbed an increasing number of women." (25) In fact, weaving became an occupation for women long before the application of technology shifted weaving

into the factories and, indeed, the cheapness of women's labour, and that of male workers on the handloom probably retarded mechanical invention and capital investment in this area.(26) And note that weaving did not become a 'skilled' factory occupation in Pinchbeck's analysis. For the conditions that eased the entry of women into weaving were also the conditions that marked the long and painful decline of hand weaving from an artisan craft skill to the debased and dishonourable trade that it had become by the 1830s. And it was the competition of the handloom that led to the tight profit margins and low wages of factory weaving (27) and contributed to its definition as 'women's work'.

Except for fine and fancy work, hand weaving was easily learned. Looms were cheap and easily acquired and the small scale, largely domestic organisation of wool and woollen cloth weaving meant that it could be readily integrated with domestic commitments or agricultural work. In addition, the erosion of apprenticeship regulations from the mid eighteenth century removed the necessity of a lengthy period of formal training, and increasing numbers of women were able to move into the trade. Expansion of cotton production at the end of the century offered plenty of light, unskilled work and so also women moved into cotton weaving.(28) Technological developments in

cotton spinning at the end of the century both made weaving easier and expanded production of yarn beyond the productive capacity of the weaving labour force. The new technological bottleneck thus created was further exacerbated by labour shortages caused by weaver enlistment to fight against the French, and the resultant huge demand for weavers, and, briefly, high wages, encouraged more and more women to flock into weaving.(29)

But if women had easy access to the trade so also did men and children and labour shortage quickly gave way to labour surplus, particularly in the lighter unskilled branches of cotton weaving where women were mainly employed.(30) And if small scale domestic organisation encouraged women to turn to weaving, so also it encouraged small clothiers with minimal capital and consequently tight profit margins - and a situation of cut throat competition developed that meant low wages, delayed payments and even no payments at all when insecure businesses failed.(31) And if the breakdown of apprenticeship regulations eased women's entry into weaving, it also eroded the last vestiges of worker control over all but a very few specialist areas of the weaving labour process, and the isolated and scattered workforce had little protection against employer exploitation.(32) Further, if hand loom production could maintain

supplies through the exploitation of thousands of cheap workers, then for mechanised factory production also to be profitable, it also had to be cheap.

Experiments had been made with power looms since the 1780s but technological problems affecting the quality of the cloth produced and the continuing relative efficiency and profitability of hand loom production meant that it was not until the 1820s and 1830s that mechanised factory production became widespread. Even then, power weaving and hand production continued alongside each other with competition acting as a lever to depress wage levels in both sectors. So, according to Pinchbeck,

In spite of the doubled and trebled output of the power loom, the rates paid for hand loom weaving were so low as to create serious competition and prevent a large margin of profit in steam weaving, where heavy overhead charges had also to be met. Hence the level of wages originally was such that women's labour was more easily obtained than that of men.(33)

Once adopted, low wages continued, being both a cause and an effect of women's work. As Factory Inspector Saunders recognised,

The small amount of wages paid to women acts as a strong inducement to employ them instead of men, and in power-loom shops this has been the case to a great



extent.(34)

Low wages were not the sole contributory reason for female dominance of factory weaving. Employers also sought those with the craft skills of hand loom weaving but the strong traditions of independence amongst the male weavers made them reluctant to enter the factories - and the manufacturers equally reluctant to employ them. Women were not only cheaper to employ, they had the necessary skills and, apparently, were more docile and more amenable to the discipline of the factory. According to Gaskell, therefore, the factory owners

finding that the child or woman was a more obedient servant to himself, and an equally efficient slave to his machinery - was disposed to displace the male adult labourer.(35)

One manufacturer baldly set out the economic advantages of employing women, particularly married women with dependants, in terms which explain one reason for their greater docility. He employed only women to operate his power looms and gave, he said,

a decided preference to married females, especially those who have families at home dependent on them for support; they are attentive, docile, more so than unmarried females, and are compelled to use their utmost exertions to procure the necessities

of life.(36)

Technological progress was slower in the woollen and worsted trades, but though manufacturers experienced some initial difficulties in persuading women to enter the factories, and the number of female weavers employed was always lower than in cotton, here, too, weaving became predominantly a female occupation.(37) Though their work was skilled, however, the female factory weavers never acquired a status equal to that enjoyed by the male spinners, nor, indeed, the wages earned by male factory weavers. Women were never employed in a supervisory capacity as tacklers or overlookers, the justification being that they lacked the physical strength necessary to carry the beams and fit them to the looms, and the technical expertise to mend the looms when necessary.(38) Nor did they generally recruit their assistants, though these were paid from the piece rate earnings of the weavers, and no 'apprenticeship' system such as the one associated with spinning developed.(39) Thus women weavers never acquired the economic and supervisory authority enjoyed by the male spinners, and despite their numerical dominance and economic importance in production, the female weaver represented no direct threat to patriarchal authority in the factory.

Despite this, the organisation of factory weaving

as a predominantly female occupation led, in the 1830s and 1840s, to an increasingly vociferous outcry against the employment of women in factories. It is here, in the 'unnatural' reversal of family roles and responsibilities seen to be caused by the employment of female weavers in the factories while the male handloom weavers experienced ever lower wages and declining employment, that the working-class home was seen to be "turned upside down". Here that the "inversion of the existing social order" was causing "ruinous consequences" with children growing up "like wild weeds", and husbands "condemned to domestic occupations" while "the wife supports the family".(40) Many such complaints were heard, and from many different groups in society; from working men to aristocrats such as Lord Ashley, from the Utilitarians to the Evangelicals, from the male weavers, from the male spinners and from the male tailors, and sometimes from the women themselves, and the volume of complaint grew louder over time. But there was no uniform pattern to such complaints in the 1830s, they varied in origin and were by no means universal, and beyond a broad adherence to the general principles of patriarchy, there was no shared cross-class or proletariat inter-class consensus as to the nature of these complaints, or, as yet, as to proposed remedies. The question of what the social

and economic roles of working-class women 'ought' to be remained undecided at this point.

Male hand-loom weavers, for example, bitterly resented the factory employment of women as weavers and actively sought the imposition of legal limitations on their hours of work.(41) There were also instances of women being excluded from certain branches of hand-weaving in attempts to protect male earnings, (42) and male weaving unions may possibly have refused to admit women though women certainly played a very prominent part in strike action in the early nineteenth century. (43) But even though the influx of female workers into the trade was seen by the Commission of 1840 as a direct cause of the labour surplus which led to the continuing decline of wages, male weavers seem to have regarded the work of women as a symptom of this decline as much as a cause.(44) It was the greedy exploitation of employers and the failure of the government to honour its responsibility to protect working people against such exploitation that had forced men, women and children to work ever-longer hours in competition with each other and against the weaving machines.(54) And conversely, the solution to the problems of the hand-weavers was for the government to constrain the free play of market forces, to impose wage controls and limit the hours of all factory labour, and thus



control this destructive competition.(45) The social role of women, as the handloom weavers understood it, was to work at home with their husbands, fathers and families, assisting with the weaving when domestic duties allowed as they had done during the 'golden age'.(46)

Male workers in the Leicester hosiery industry, on the other hand, had no objection to women working in the trade; their complaint was rather that the domestic duties of their wives limited the time they could spend working and reduced their earnings.(47) Here, fluctuations in demand meant that the putting-out system, which gave employment to women in their homes, remained a rational and profitable form of organisation until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Technological innovation introduced changes in the organisation of labour in the manufacture of cheap stockings in the second quarter of the century and knitting moved into workshops while seaming remained as a domestic occupation. Customary divisions of labour within the family and the physical strength necessary to operate the new wide frames ensured that knitting thus became defined as a male task while seaming became the work of women. Women continued to work as knitters in the rural areas, manufacturing fully fashioned stockings on the narrow frames, but uncertain and fluctuating demand

meant this branch of the industry became increasingly marginal. As Osterud has argued, though their actual work differed, women in both urban and rural areas "were increasingly employed in the lowest paid and most casualised forms of labour." (48) Occupational segregation and low wages meant that women did not compete against male labour or threaten male wage levels, their subordinate position in the family economy preserved traditional gender relationships, and the location of their work allowed wage earning employment to be combined with domestic labour. In this instance, therefore, neither the home nor gender relationships were 'turned upside down' but remained compatible with traditional expectations of gender roles.

The attitudes of the spinners stand in sharp contrast to those of the stocking knitters. The 1820s saw a hardening of the spinners' views regarding the employment of women in the trade with a development from the relatively informal and piecemeal opposition to female spinners evident in the early part of the century (49) to a much more systematic and sustained (and sometimes vicious) strategy of exclusion supported by an increasingly explicit and patriarchal rationale. (50)

The immediate reason for this development is to be found in one of the cost cutting strategies

adopted by some manufacturers, which led to direct competition between male and female spinners in the 1820s and 1830s. Manufacturers in Lancashire followed the example of the Scottish millowners in the later 1820s and began to replace male spinners with women working at half the piece work rates; a policy that became even more widespread in the 1830s when technological developments meant that women could operate mules with up to 300 spindles. In Bolton, for example, women were employed at 12s. to 14s. per week in 1830 as against male wages of 25s. to 30s., and in Manchester women working for 10s. to 15s. replaced the more expensive male spinners. Indeed, "whole mills" were said to be operated by female mule spinners in the 1820s and 1830s.(51) This direct competition was not sustained; the long mules and double mules which were introduced as a simultaneous cost cutting strategy placed a premium on male strength as men produced a greater quantity of yarn and greater output ultimately proved to be more profitable than cheap labour.(52) By 1837, therefore, the number of female mule spinners had decreased and, according to John Doherty, a former mule spinner leader, there were "not a considerable number now".(53)

Nonetheless, changes in the organisation of labour associated with new methods of production, still

presented a considerable threat to the spinners. The development of large urban factories after 1825, where the spinning and weaving processes were combined under one roof, introduced large numbers of women weavers into the work-place who were outside the authority of the spinners. Increased production on the long mules and double mules meant unemployment for numbers of spinners while those who retained their jobs experienced a more taxing workload at reduced piece-rates.(54) Even more significantly in this context, the authority and status of the spinner was threatened by increases in the number of piecers needed to operate these machines, and the consequent erosion of the apprenticeship system of recruitment; (55) a threat which became even more potent with the restrictions on child labour imposed by the Factory Act of 1833.(56) Smelser's argument, that it was the erosion of the close work relationship between the adult male spinner and his piecer son that largely caused the dissatisfactions evident amongst the spinners has been convincingly attacked but his contention that the 1820s saw an "array of threats to the family's traditional organisation" (57) has considerable validity if re-examined from the perspective of family gender relations and working-class notions of masculinity. To the adult male spinner of the 1820s women represented both a direct



threat to employment and an indirect threat to their 'paternal' authority at a time when both were under attack from other developments. A policy of occupational segregation by gender, the exclusion of women from areas of work where they competed directly with male workers, thus represented one strategy used by the spinners - and by other groups of workers - in the wider struggle against new conditions of economic exploitation as well as a defence of the traditional authority of the male as the head of the working-class family.

The tailors were also generally opposed to women working in their trade and Taylor's perceptive analysis of their grievances allows clarification of the points made above. In tailoring, sub-contracting of outwork encouraged the sweated employment of women to undercut the wages of male tailors, with the result that there was a sharp deterioration in the position of skilled male workers during the 1820s.(58) Taylor quotes from Morrison's editorial comments in the Owenite journal the Pioneer in April 1834 to illustrate the situation in which the tailors found themselves.

The editorial began by pointing out that "women have always been worse paid for their labour than the men" and thus "by long habit and patient acquiescence, they

have been taught to regard this inequality as justice." They were therefore, "content with merely a portion of the man's wage, even when their work is equally valuable", which meant they could readily be used to under-cut men's wages: ... It was to prevent this "diminution of wages" that the tailors had actively organised against female employment.(59)

This hostility did not arise simply because of the economic competition cheap female labour represented but also from pressures on family roles and relationships. To quote Taylor again,

As male earnings and employment prospects deteriorated, increasing numbers of women were forced to perform jobs which could no longer be readily integrated with family duties, while at the same time many men found themselves pushed into an unfamiliar dependence on wife (and child) earnings. What was at stake ... in the 'feminisation' of the declining trades was not only the status of male craftsmen, but also the conventional balance of domestic relationships, in which men functioned primarily as breadwinners and women primarily as family servicers, integrating household tasks with casual wage-earning activities.(60)

So, alongside the variety of working-class initiatives and movements that were expressed in a whole "avalanche of disturbances" in the 1820s and

1830s, (61) also went attempts to re-establish traditional notions of masculinity and gender divisions of labour, with a re-affirmation of male pride in the possession of skills and family authority. What Smelser has described as the "structural" strikes of the spinners, for example, were motivated by concerns about a whole variety of work- and family-related issues, with a policy of occupational segregation being increasingly pursued as the male spinners sought to protect and improve their own position as workers and as men.(62) From a position where, as in the 1790s, the rules of a powerful mixed association of spinners specifically recognised the equal rights of women over apprenticeship, (63) the spinners moved through an occasional and piecemeal opposition to female workers in the first two decades of the century, to a specific policy of segregation by 1829. In that year the spinners of England, Scotland and Ireland adopted specific policies excluding women from membership of the amalgamated Union and from the training that would allow female piecers to become skilled spinners. Union rules stipulated,

That no person or persons be learned or allowed to spin ..., except the son brother or orphan nephew of spinners and the poor relations of the proprietors of the mills

... That female spinners be urged to become members of an association to be formed exclusively for themselves.(64)

Similar policies were pursued by other groups of workers and by the late 1820s, the practice of excluding women from membership had become general within male trade unionism.(65) The strike weapon was also used against women workers with increasing frequency, with the tailors, for example, striking against the employment of female workers in 1827, and 1830 and declaring "war against the female tailors" in the strike of 1834.(66)

To re-emphasise an important point, however, it must be stressed that it was not the employment of women as such that was opposed by the male workers of this period, but their employment in areas where they represented a threat to customary ways of life and authority structures, or 'competition' to male workers. By long-standing tradition women from the labouring classes were expected to work in economic production and to contribute jointly to the earning of the 'family wage'. "None but a fool", advised A Present for a Serving Maid published in 1743, "will take a wife whose bread must be earned solely by his labour", and warned, "you cannot expect to marry in such a manner as neither of you shall have occasion to work."(67) The employment of women as members of



the family 'team', whether in the factory, the workshop or the home, therefore, broadly conformed to custom. Seccombe has summarised the principles underlying acceptable conditions of work for women.

The traditional conception of a woman working for pay was predicated on her subordinate but essential place as a productive member of a family unit. If she could earn money at home, this conception was preserved. If she worked outside her home, she must work as a member of the family labour team ... in order to conserve the traditional sense of a woman's place. (original emphasis) (68)

Changes in the organisation of labour for textile production eroded these traditions in three main ways. The first complaint was that many women were deprived of the opportunity to contribute to the family wage economy in ways they had formerly. Pinchbeck recognised,

Many of the journeymen, particularly among the weavers, objected strongly to the growth of a system which deprived them of the assistance of their wife and children, and it was afterwards one of the bitterest complaints against the factory system that by it women and children were deprived of employment they could carry on in the home ... So accustomed were they to the idea of a family wage and the financial contribution of women and children, that

the substitution of an individual wage and the responsibility of the father for the entire support of his family were changes which at first were neither welcomed nor understood. (69)

The second cause of grievance was that, by employing women as individuals away from the domestic environment and paying them individual wages, the factory system flouted all cultural norms of women's place within the patriarchal household thereby, as it was widely perceived, threatening the very structure of family life. And finally, it was the threat that the working woman represented to the job security, wage levels and status of male workers, particularly skilled male workers, that galvanised them into defensive action. Here, however, grievance and response were informed by the rather different traditions of the skilled craft workers where a tradition of high male earnings meant the customary expectation of a 'family wage' was less strong. (70)

And while the spinners did not themselves generally come from this artisan strata, (71) their grievances and their defensive tactics were largely informed by the same traditions. The principles which underlay the spinners' opposition to women workers were expressed very clearly in a union official's response to criticisms voiced in the Manchester Guardian in 1824. As he said,

In one instance, where the master declared his determination to fill the mill with women only, the men left their employment. But, sir, this does not apply to the great body of spinners,... We do not stand opposed to women working, but we do enter our protest against the principle on which they are employed. The women, in nine cases out of ten, have only themselves to support, - while the men, generally have families. This the employers know, and of this the unprincipled take advantage. (72)

This argument, that men had a right to higher wages than women because of their responsibilities as the main wage earner of the family, was one which was articulated with increasing frequency in all trades where female competition threatened male workers, (73) but there was, as yet, little suggestion that all working men should be expected to be the sole wage earner for their families or that married women should not engage in paid labour. (74) Indeed, male attitudes towards working women were sometimes contradictory and ambivalent and there were divisions even amongst skilled male workers as to the policies to be pursued to protect themselves against the cheap competition of female labour. So, as in Leicester in 1833, male spinners could demand the reinstatement of women dismissed for union membership (75) while disallowing their membership of the male union; and

John Doherty, the spinners' leader and Owenite, could oppose the use of female labour to undercut the men, and could agree, as he did in 1838, that women's labour in the factories had a bad effect "on morals and domestic habits" when only four years earlier he had urged the London tailors to acknowledge "the natural equality of women" and to include them in all their "schemes of improvement." (76)

This latter view, which argued that non-exclusionist strategies and a recognition of the common interests of men and women as workers in co-operative association could be pursued against the exploitive policies of manufacturers, found its strongest support amongst the Owenites. Morrison, for example, argued that

since man has doomed her (the working woman) to inferiority, and stamped an inferior value upon all the products of her industry, the low wages of woman are not so much the voluntary price she sets upon her labour, as the price which is fixed by the tyrannical influence of male supremacy. To make the two sexes equal, and to reward them equally, would settle the matter amicably; but any attempt to settle it otherwise will prove an act of gross tyranny. (77)

But even amongst the Owenites opinions were divided, with the majority of Owenite tailors, for example,



supporting exclusionist rather than co-operative policies against the women working in the trade.(78) For the majority of working men, principles of gender equality had little substance when they came into conflict with deeply felt notions of masculinity, and well tested exclusionist strategies against cheap 'competition' seemed to offer more immediate advantages than the longer term, less tangible benefits of worker co-operation and unity. A new interpretation of gender roles was beginning to be articulated in the 1830s, one that defended the cultural values of patriarchy by extending differentials of task allocation and status within economic production into a more rigid division of labour between the sexes. Instead of occupational segregation within paid work, women were to be excluded from paid work wherever possible or confined to specific areas of 'women's work'.

The argument begins to run ahead of itself here, as re-interpretations of the 'ideal' role of the working-class woman were presented as one means of addressing the social problems affecting the 'condition of England' and this was an issue of the 1840s rather than the 1830s. What was at issue at this point was still the identification and definition of these 'problems' and, most importantly, the question of whose definition as to the specific

nature of these problems was to prevail. And the furore surrounding the 'evils of the factory system' in the early and middle 1830s became a major site of what Perkin has called "the primary conflict in the newly born class society", the struggle between different interest groups for the "minds and hearts" of the nation. It was a struggle to dominate the social culture, to define the 'ideal' society, the 'ideal' citizen and the 'ideal' way of life for working people. It was, in short, the "struggle between the ideals". (79)

In the early and middle 1830s working men and women were still coming to grips with the dimensions of their grievances, while others, from a whole variety of backgrounds, were becoming sharply and abruptly aware of the extent of the social problems generated by industrialisation and urbanisation. For working men, particularly skilled and organised working men, the agitation surrounding the early stages of the short-time movement was more than simply a strategy to ameliorate immediate grievance, though this was an important aspect of the movement. It was even more than a straightforward defence of traditional notions of masculinity, though this was a fundamental point of grievance. And though Thompson's claim that the early stages of the factory movement represented "an affirmation of human rights by the

workers themselves" (80) requires some qualification, not least in respect of the rights of women workers, male worker support for a short-time bill was an affirmation, and a defence, of traditional family forms and relationships and traditional values and ways of life increasingly threatened by the industrial organisation of production. (81) These were "human rights", then, as defined and understood in accordance with the patriarchal values of pre-industrial society.

That the trade unionists and working-class radicals found themselves in an "embarrassing alliance" with the "traditionalist Tory" (82) in their denunciation of factory 'evils' somewhat paradoxically underlines the point that the factory movement of the early 1830s was a battleground for conflicting interests. The "almost volcanic eruption" of social conscience amongst a variety of social groups may well have been prompted by humanitarian instincts outraged by the newly perceived plight of factory children. (83) At the same time it may also have been a defensive reaction to threatened insurrection (and it must not be forgotten that in the reform crisis of 1831 and 1832 there were well founded fears of revolution (84)) or a cynical attempt at vote catching (85), but it also had a far wider significance as a platform for the expression

of rival social theories, and the 'aristocratic paternalists' led by Michael Sadler were also at the forefront of the campaign for factory reform. Indeed, in Perkin's view, this campaign was the "most successful manifestation" of the movement for the revival of the old ideals of paternalism, with master and man linked by reciprocal bonds of responsibility and obligation, as the panacea for social ills.(86) Against the laissez-faire arguments of Malthusian capitalism Sadler put forward his "Paternal System" which argued a return to "true Tory principles", expressed by Blackwood's journal as follows,

Our exposition of true Tory principles - of principles which, while they maintain the due order and proportion of each separate rank in society, maintain also that protection and support are the right of all ... As Tories, we maintain that it is the duty of the people to pay obedience to those in authority over them: but it is also the duty of those set in authority to protect those who are placed below them.(87)

As a vehicle for high Tory propaganda, Sadler's Committee of Inquiry into the factory system was almost bound to be outraged by the instances of cruelty, abuse and immoral behaviour found in the factories, not least because such abuses signalled an abrogation of the responsibility of those with power



"to foster, to protect, to cherish, encourage, promote" the well being of the 'lower orders'.(88) And in defining the factory employment of women as a major social 'problem' the paternalists also underlined the extent to which they shared common cause with many working men. Here, therefore, can be seen the source of the distortions, exaggerations and misrepresentations of evidence presented by this Committee which were so resented by many manufacturers and workers that Sadler's Committee was replaced by a further Commission of Inquiry in 1833. Yet although this Commission tempered many of the claims made by Sadler's Committee and demonstrated that there were "many instances of detriment to the truth" in the evidence it presented, it was the picture drawn by by Sadler that caught the popular imagination.(89) This was 'evidence' that informed a stream of pamphlets, speeches and books to present a picture of almost unrelieved hardship and cruelty, moral degradation and the collapse of family life in the cotton districts of Lancashire. A central figure in this picture was the immoral 'factory girl', the ignorant and indifferent wife and mother who spent her earnings on drink and tawdry finery. Thus Gaskell, J.P.Kay (later Kay-Shuttleworth), Oastler, Bull and many others condemned the so-called immoralities and deficiencies of the women employed

in factories and the destruction of family life and filial affection amongst the operatives. Kay claimed, for example, that

Domestic economy is neglected, domestic comforts are unknown....Home has no other relation to him (the artisan) than that of shelter - few pleasures are there- it chiefly presents to him a scene of physical exhaustion, from which he is glad to escape ... His house is ill furnished, uncleanly, often ill ventilated, ...: his food, from want of forethought and domestic economy, is meagre and innutritious; he is debilitated and hypochondriachal, and falls the victim of dissipation.(90)

Gaskell, as ever, went further to claim that

A household thus constituted, in which all the decencies and moral observances of domestic life are constantly violated, reduces its inmates to a condition little elevated above that of the savage. Recklessness, improvidence, and unnecessary poverty, starvation, drunkenness, parental cruelty and carelessness, filial disobedience, neglect of conjugal rights, absence of maternal love, destruction of brotherly and sisterly affection, are too often its constituents, and the result of such a combination are moral degradation, ruin of domestic enjoyments and social misery.(91)

Many factory owners and workers, and their defenders

denied these charges with equal vehemence. Henry Ashworth, a classic example of a paternal industrialist much concerned for the "moral and social improvement" of his workforce, (92) told the 1833 Commission,

I am happy to say that there is no married female employed by us, nor has any one been discharged or refused work on that ground; nor do I know that we have any married workman who finds it necessary or is desirous that his wife should follow any employ but that of her domestic duties.(93)

Ashworth's opinion was supported by statistical evidence presented by Dr.Mitchell, one of the Commissioners. "it is known by the returns" he said, "as well as from the evidence given to the District Commissioners, that very few women work in the factories after marriage."(94) Numbers of the male operatives also denied that factory girls made bad wives and a female witness to the 1833 Commission declared with some indignation "You think we can do nought but work in factories, neither brew, nor bake, nor sew."(95)

The 'truth' of the situation in the factory towns of the North, however, was informed by preconception, bias and opinion, and subjective judgements prevailed over facts and figures. Fears about the deterioration of family life amongst operatives

proved very difficult to refute, and the perceived ignorance and inadequacy of the factory girl was a continuing theme in the reports of the 1833 Commission and in 'factory' literature. The evidence of Rowland Detrosier, the Lancashire Socialist, is worth quoting at length as it lists many of the deficiencies that factory women were popularly supposed to demonstrate. As he told the Commission,

One of the greatest evils to the working man is the ignorance of the women of his own class, who are generally incapable of becoming either good wives or good mothers....Brought up in the factory until they are married, and sometimes working there long after that event has taken place, even when they have become mothers, they are almost entirely ignorant of household duties, and are incapable of laying out the money their husbands have earned to the best advantage. They are equally incapable of preparing his victuals, in an economical and comfortable manner.... A working man is fortunate, indeed, who happens to marry a young woman who has been brought up in service, and whose habits of cleanliness and knowledge of household duties secures him a comfortable home and economical management.

The practice of working men in general is to entrust the laying out of their money to their wives, and hence a knowledge of household duties, combined with habits of



industry, cleanliness and economy, is of first-rate importance amongst the females of this class of society to the working men. In thousands of instances the very contrary of these desirable virtues prevails, and the industrious working man lives in misery and debt from the conduct of an ignorant gin-drinking woman called his wife. Every apology, however, may be offered for some of these unfortunate creatures, for they have never had the opportunity of learning better. (96)

For Detrosier substitute Kay-Shuttleworth, Leonard Horner and the majority of the Inspectors of elementary schools and you have, in sum, the whole philosophy of the education which was to be put forward as the 'ideal' for working-class girls in the region.

The ten-hour supporters joined Oastler and Sadler to claim that the appointment of the 1833 Commission was a delaying tactic and that the Commissioners were "instruments of the employers" and were pursuing their own particular interests. (97) But in the continuing agitation and in the legislation that followed we see, rather, the growing influence of the increasingly influential middle-class 'entrepreneurs' and 'professionals' (98) interacting with the views of trade unionists and of the political paternalists. In the Factory Act of 1833, therefore,

supporters of the principles of laissez-faire (sustained by Utilitarian beliefs in the value of competition, free trade and self-dependence) successfully resisted interference in the free play of market forces by denying the limitations on adult female hours explicitly advocated by the paternalistic Lord Ashley and the limitation of all labour implicitly sought by the ten hour supporters. The eight hour limit imposed on the work of children, on the other hand, represented at least a partial victory for paternalism while the machinery for enforcement, the employment of paid Inspectors and the identification of mass education as a means of social improvement, illustrate the growing importance of the professional middle classes. What Perkin has referred to as "the leaven of professionalism" was thus allied to the ideals of paternalism to enact legislation which went against the wishes of the great majority of capitalist manufacturers. (99)

The other losers here were the majority of working people in the sense that their 'ideal' of 'the family in the factory' was disrupted even further by the 1833 Act, despite the widespread evasions that occurred in practice. The shorter hours worked by children, or their dismissal by those manufacturers unwilling to take the trouble to provide schooling

for them, added to family problems of supervision and control, as did their frequent replacement by adult female workers. (100) These problems were to contribute to the alteration in male worker views evident in the 1840s, when trade unions representing the interests of skilled and unskilled workers were increasingly to advocate a wholly domestic 'ideal' role for women but in the middle and late 1830s majority attitudes were only just beginning to change as workers came to recognise the attractions of such a goal. Francis Place argued the benefits to be gained in the Poor Man's Guardian in 1835. If, he said,

the men refused to work in mills and factories with girls, as other trades have done, in workshops and for those masters who employ women and girls, the young women who will otherwise be degraded by factory labour will become all that can be desired as companionable wives and the whole condition of factory workers will soon be improved, the men will obtain competent wages for their maintenance.(101)

The "alliance" of the paternalists and the workers extended beyond a shared perception of the 'evils' of the factory to a shared, essentially conservative and patriarchal view of family relationships and roles. The authority of the father of the family replicated

that of the squire and the factory master, and his duty, like theirs, was to rule, guide and protect with firmness and resolution. Women, whom God had placed under the authority of their fathers and husbands, owed to them a duty of service and deference. Their domestic obligations did not preclude their employment - the advocates of paternalism believed the poor should be self reliant and this meant everyone in the family should undertake productive work - but the home and the family was their primary responsibility.(102) The ideals of the middle classes, ideals which saw the transformation of society through a moral revolution as the answer not only to factory evils but to all social problems, also emphasised the moral duties of the wife and mother - and their domestic responsibilities. In the 1840s these middle-class ideals were to become dominant and the implications of this vis a vis the social roles of women are explored in chapter 6. In the 1830s, however, though the 'struggle between the ideals' was still in progress and although such ideals were yet to find general acceptance, all these groups shared an implicit assumption that the 'ideal' society was a patriarchal society. A shared adherence to the values of patriarchy was thus a considerable force for social cohesion.



But what of the women? Did they put forward any alternative versions of their ideal society? And were their views considered? So far their views have been conspicuously absent from this discussion, as indeed they largely were from contemporary debate, with their interests being seen to be "indisputably included in those of other individuals, ... either in that of their fathers or in that of their husbands." (103) But James Mill's bland assumption that the views of women could be "struck off without inconvenience" was being questioned. Women were expressing their political and social views and, as the words of one female correspondent to the Owenite Co-operative magazine in 1826 implicitly suggest, were questioning the authority of men to speak for women. "Who" she inquired, "....shall settle the question of the 'True social position and claims of women?" She continued,

Men have hitherto done it. How has it been done? They have dictated duties towards themselves, and, with general consent, have punished us severely when those duties have not been rigidly observed ... Have any of the self named reforming parties, so vociferous now in England for their own rights, given a single thought to, or shown any desire for ... change in this Helot condition of their country women? (104)

As this correspondent pointed out, it was only amongst the Owenites that the rights of women were seen to be an important issue for debate. Yet, as Taylor has shown, Owenism contained within it many different viewpoints and aspirations, and numbers of male Owenites felt that the rights of women had a lesser priority than those of men or, like the London tailors, were actively hostile to female 'competition'.(105) When a female member of the audience at a meeting of the United Trades Association observed

that a great deal was said of the slavery of the working classes, and of the inadequate wages of the men, but never a word of the slavery of the poor women, who were obliged to toil from dawn to midnight for seven or eight shillings a week.(106)

the response, as expressed in The Crisis, was that "the still small voice of woman ... must be suppressed for a season till man be served."(107)

But that voice was not altogether suppressed and in the 'Page for the Women', begun in 1834 in The Pioneer, the second most widely read working-class newspaper of the period, that 'still small voice' expressed female grievances with considerable force. As these letters illustrated, the operation of patriarchal ideologies, when enforced by physical and

economic power, could all too often translate into realities more akin to female slavery.

and if she (the poor woman) offers the least resistance, it is thrust down her throat with his fist, possibly with the loss of a tooth or the spilling of a little of that blood which he thinks so inferior to his own. As he is lord of the castle he is master and must be obeyed. (108)

The strategies employed by the unionists might be effective in achieving better conditions for their members, but what of the unprotected female workers? How were their interests to be safeguarded?

surely the men might think of a better method of benefiting themselves than that of driving so many industrious women out of employment. Surely, while they loudly complain of oppression, they will not turn oppressors themselves. Surely they will not give their enemies cause to say, when a woman and her offspring are seen begging in the streets, - This is the work of union;... this is the remedy proposed by the men of Great Britain to relieve them from their present distress!(109)

Yet despite the Owenite Utopian ideal of communal life and shared labour, the ideal for this writer, viewed from the perspective of her immediate circumstances, was not one where gender divisions of labour were eliminated. Rather, she wanted a world in which wives could fulfil their domestic responsibilities without the extra burden of employment. As Taylor has argued,

Perhaps in the New Moral World it would be possible, as the Owenites promised, to integrate collectivised domestic work with other productive and intellectual employments, but in the Old Immoral World housework and waged work had become a terrible double load which no woman would willingly take on so long as she had a husband (or some other conjugal partner) to support her. The 'ideology of domesticity' was not just a set of oppressive ideals foisted on a supine female population; it was an ideology actively adopted by many working-class women as the best in a very narrow range of unhappy options.(110)

Are Taylor's conclusions supported by evidence of the attitudes of women outside Owenite circles? A superficial examination of their wide ranging and active involvement in all forms of working-class protest might suggest not. Women were very much to the fore in food riots in the early nineteenth century, they were involved in Luddite resistance to



new technology, in strike actions, in the movement for factory reform and in all kinds of trade union activity. They were members of Friendly Societies, of societies for political reform and took an active part in opposition against the 1834 Poor Law. Nevertheless, despite an upsurge in militant female activity in the 1830s, (111) 'Elizabeth of Todmorden' could still complain of "the apathy that is manifested by my sex generally", (112) and it is difficult to sustain an argument that female involvement in protest and reform movements marked a desire for major change in the social relations of gender or for female independence.(113) It might justifiably be argued that the domestic perspective and self-deprecating vocabulary often employed by female protesters represented their attempt to preempt male hostility (114); that their "apathy" was as much a product of male attitudes of hostility, arrogance and patronisation, of exhaustion and overwork, or of the casual, unskilled nature of much of their paid work (115); and that their secondary and subordinate role in less spontaneous, more organised protest stemmed from domestic and social constraints (116). But, though they protested against injustice and the operation of gender divisions of labour, women did not challenge the traditional family roles and relationships of men and women. If

working men were strongly defensive of their notions of masculinity, so also were women of their femininity. Speaking as "wives, mothers and daughters, in their social domestic and moral capacities", with their protests "often couched in terms which suggest the restoration of lost rights rather than the establishment of new ones", (117) the demands articulated by women demonstrated a wish for an ideal society wherein they could fulfil their responsibilities towards their families and take a pride in their own domestic skills.

But with a realistic awareness of the less than ideal conditions of daily existence, women also strongly defended their right to earn a decent living when compelled to do so. And the suggestion, put forward in The Examiner in 1832, that women should be wholly excluded from the factories, brought the following, amusingly expressed but very serious response from 'The Female Operatives of Todmorden',

You are for doing away with our services in manufactories altogether. So much the better, if you had pointed out any other more eligible and practical employment for the surplus female labour,... If our competition were withdrawn and short hours substituted, we have no doubt that the effects would be as you have stated, 'not to lower wages, as the male branch of the family would be enabled to to earn as much

as the whole had done,' but for the thousands of females who are employed in manufactories, who have no legitimate claim on any male relative for employment or support, and who have, through a variety of circumstances, been early thrown on their own resources for a livelihood, what is to become of them?

In this neighbourhood, ... no inconsiderable number of females, who must depend on their own exertions, or their parishes for support, have been forced, of necessity, into the manufactories, from their total inability to earn a living at home.

It is a lamentable fact, that, in these parts of the country, there is scarcely any other mode of employment for female industry, if we except servitude and dressmaking. Of the former of these, there is no chance of employment for one-twentieth of the candidates that would rush into the field, to say nothing of the lowering of the wages of our sisters in the same craft; and of the latter, galling as some of the hardships of the manufactories are ..., yet there are few women who have been so employed, that would change conditions with the ill-used genteel little slaves, who have to lose sleep and health, in catering to the whims and frivolities of the butterflies of fashion.

We see no way of escape from starvation, but ... fairly to ship ourselves off to Van Diemen's land, on the very delicate errand of husband hunting; and having safely

arrived at the 'Land of Goshen', jump ashore with a 'Who wants me?'. (118)

It is impossible to evaluate the impact of industrialisation on women's levels of participation in paid labour but it is clear that, whether their work opportunities increased or decreased, the early stages of industrialisation in no way 'emancipated' (119) the working-class women of the industrial North or equalised relations between the sexes. Differences in task allocation, in wage levels and in status, though blurred in some areas, still characterised the work of men and women and still located women in the bottom ranks of labour hierarchies inside and outside the factories. Even the 'independent' female weaver hardly earned enough to finance a decent standard of living let alone the dissipated life style that was attributed to her in popular fiction. (120) Women and children did outnumber male workers in the factories but, contrary to popular myth, few of these workers were married women, (121) most wives continued to 'fit in' whatever work they could get around their domestic commitments and, as we have seen, few seem to have questioned the 'natural' divisions of family life and patriarchal authority. Nevertheless, the image of the 'factory girl' with her independent wages and jaunty self-confidence powerfully symbolised the unwelcome changes precipitated by



industrial capitalism. And whether or not she had displaced the male hand-weaver from his role as chief family provider, whether she was married or single, virtuous or immoral, skilled in the domestic arts or a feckless and ignorant slut was less significant than the fact that she represented the end of the harmonious interlocking of family values and organisation of economic production that was seen previously to have prevailed. She symbolised the rapid proliferation of mechanised production which devalued the honourable labour of husbands and fathers, the exploitation of employers which forced men, women and children to work ever-longer hours for ever-lower wages, the poverty which eroded male and female pride in their ability to fulfil their traditional responsibilities and the forced submission to the machine as a de-skilled and de-personalised 'hand' that contrasted so sharply with the images of the 'golden age' before the factories came to the North.

The female worker was, in sum, both a direct threat to the security, earnings, status and authority of the male workforce both within the factory and outside it and, in her very visible presence in the factory, was also a symbol of the threatened or actual loss of all that working people held dear - and which they sought to defend through

industrial and political action. Though women neither directly questioned the patriarchal status quo, though the female weaver represented a male/female occupational interchange between spinning and weaving rather than the 'displacement' of male workers, the organisation of women's work in economic production became increasingly defined as a major area of tension in inter-class conflict in the industrial North.

And with the awful warning of where such conflict had led the French nation not many years previously, and with the challenge to their own traditional authority presented by ascendant capitalist interests, the aristocratic Tories recognised both a need and an opportunity to secure the allegiance of working people in a common defence of traditional values and customs against the encroachments of industrial capitalism. The result was the definition of the factory employment of women and the perceived collapse of family life amongst the industrial working classes as a key issue of the 1830s, and the subject of continuing conflict, debate and negotiation between labour, capital and the state over subsequent years.

**Change and Continuity in Agricultural Production:  
rural Norfolk and Suffolk in the early nineteenth  
century.**

Agriculture was a declining sector in terms of the relative proportions of workers employed on the land in the first half of the century, but in numerical terms it remained the most important area of employment until mid-century. (122) As in the textile industries of the industrial North, the development of modern capitalism prompted far reaching changes in the organisation of labour and agricultural production; changes which had a major impact on the organisation of family life amongst the labouring population and on the employment of women. But although these changes generated or exacerbated considerable social problems and unrest they neither attracted the degree of popular attention given to developments in the North of the country nor did they arouse the same unease. And in the similarities and differences between the impact of changes and reactions to them in these two regions - and both were areas where change provoked a crisis of hegemony associated with the erosion of 'traditional' rights and expectations but where the winning of the consent of the people to such change was pursued in strikingly different forms - are illuminated a

variety of factors which informed responses to change.

In the immediate context of this study, perhaps the most significant consequence of the rationalisation of agricultural production and organisation of labour associated with the intensification of capitalist farming practices from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century onwards was a drastic curtailment in the opportunities for income generating employment available to single and married women. Statistical evidence of women's participation in agricultural work is of dubious reliability, (123) and the considerable regional, local and occupational variations in the timing and pace of innovations, and the sometimes contradictory effects of national events such as the French wars and of forms of social organisation such as poor relief make generalisations regarding chronology dangerous. It is clear, however, that by the 1830s women living in the agricultural districts of Suffolk and Norfolk had experienced considerable dislocations in their traditional ways of life, leading to an unprecedented reliance on agricultural wage labour as a means of earning an independent or supplementary income.

To begin with enclosure. As Snell has remarked, enclosure is no longer regarded "as the sine qua non



of innovation" (124) in agriculture, but the direct and indirect consequences of land enclosure were enormously significant for the lives and work of women as individuals and as family members. In the earlier eighteenth century the wives and daughters of small owner occupiers and those with access to common lands could, through the raising of livestock and growing of crops for subsistence and profit, make an important contribution to the family economy; even, in some instances, contributing as much to the family support as the wages earned by a husband in full employment (125). Enclosure not only denied such productive by-employments to many women but also operated as a catalyst, accelerating changes initiated by other innovatory trends in agricultural production which combined to force a radical change in the work of women and the domestic economy of agricultural families.

By the early nineteenth century, therefore, enclosure and the associated spread of large farms across the East of England had deprived the majority of labouring families in Norfolk and Suffolk of the income and/or resources previously contributed by their independent labour, whilst at the same time raising the immediate costs of family subsistence by making it necessary to purchase items such as fuel and food previously obtained at minimal or no cost.

From a semi-independent existence, where ~~wage~~ earning and domestic production supplemented each other and where wives, children and husbands all contributed to family subsistence, many labouring families were forced to a complete dependence on wage labour. But for women with family commitments there was little in the way of alternative wage earning activity that could be carried on at home. The other traditional by-employments of women in textile production were also declining as manufacture became relocated in the industrial North and as employers forced vulnerable workers to accept ever-lower wage rates.(126) Thus in Framlingham in Suffolk, for example, it was said in 1824,

There is no prospect of a reduction in the poors (sic) rates ... The women and children have little or nothing to do, as ..., the spinning of wool by hand, which used to employ so many, is now done away, it being transferred to Yorkshire, and done by machinery. (127)

"Some years back", reported the 1843 Commission on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture,

the labouring classes of Suffolk and Norfolk were much better off than they are now, owing to the very general employment of women and children in hand spinning. That employment has been put an end to by machinery and no other domestic manufacture

has been found to supply its place... the family earnings and employment are so much lessened by the loss of the spinning. (128)

Single women were also vulnerable to unemployment as their traditional occupation in farm service was also declining. The yearly hiring and boarding of workers that characterised farm service changed gradually through a variety of practices, but by the 1830s it was unusual in the South and East where the seasonal labour requirements of cereal production and a plentiful supply of labour discouraged its continuance. (129) Snell estimates that around 15 to 38 per cent of the agricultural labour force (male and female) in the South and East still enjoyed the relative security of farm service in 1831, and where pastoral farming with its more regular labour requirements remained, as in East Suffolk, skilled workers such as dairy maids were still hired as farm servants rather than employed as day labourers. (130) Many of those described as 'domestic' servants probably combined work in the house with field work, but in general terms, the decline of farm service meant that previous distinctions between the agricultural employments of unmarried and married women largely disappeared, with both searching for employment as agricultural day labourers.

The employment of women in agricultural day work

was not new. Women's work was always important at harvest time, and weeding, stone picking and other unskilled, casual work was frequently done by women although they were generally excluded from heavy or 'skilled' work in the fields. (131) In contrast to the situation in textiles, changes associated with the intensification of capitalist farming in the mid eighteenth century had extended and consolidated existing gender divisions of labour with, in Norfolk and Suffolk, a greater concentration on cereal production reinforcing male dominance of 'heavy' and 'skilled' work in ploughing and harvesting. Hand tool technology, such as the scythe, placed a greater premium on 'male' attributes of strength and skill, and in the situation of labour surplus that prevailed after the French wars, there were few other incentives to substitute female for male labour. Indeed, the need to offset possible reductions in wage costs against increases in the poor rates resulting from the unemployment of family men provided a real disincentive against female labour. Male pressure may also have been exerted against the employment of women to operate threshing machines and on jobs such as dung-spreading, (132) but even without this, gender divisions of labour were adequately safeguarded by the absence of any real economic advantages to be gained by the farmers by



the widespread use of female labour. Thus, though the available supply of female labour was increased, this was not matched by any increase in the work available to women. In fact the reverse was the case, with increased specialisation in cereal production and increasing use of the scythe for harvesting (133) leading to a decline in women's participation in harvesting and to marked changes in male and female patterns of employment which meant that the work of women became limited to Spring weeding and haymaking and to a relatively minor involvement in the harvest as gatherers and tyers and as gleaners. (134)

Some suggestion was made that male under- and unemployment - and the consequent rise in the payment of poor relief - was due to the 'displacement' of male workers by women and children. An enquiry into the operation of poor relief in Suffolk in 1832, for example, clearly assumed that their responsibility for family maintenance gave men a prime right to whatever work was available, and as the Commissioners saw it, the agricultural work "which should be performed by the men" had been thrown "on the shoulders of the women" by the system of paying poor relief. (135) But the rise in relief payments in the parishes of Bosmere and Claydon that prompted such disapproval took place in the Spring, a time of year when the tasks associated with 'women's work' were

plentiful, but when 'men's work' was limited. Similarly, the employment of men from the parish of Mildenhall on road repairs at parish expense while women and girls were employed to hoe the wheat and to weed, (136) also conformed to gender divisions of labour in cereal production.

Both sexes experienced the seasonal unemployment that was endemic to cereal production and it is impossible to be specific about the extent of women's involvement in agricultural work. Rather than 'displacing' men from their work, however, it is likely that many women were forced into an almost complete economic dependence on male incomes, except when seasonal casual work was available. As Davies wrote in 1795, whereas women and children had previously been able to earn on a fairly regular basis, declining work opportunities meant that "...now, few of these are constantly employed ... so that almost the whole burden of providing for their families rests upon the men" (original emphasis). (137) And in the 1806 report of The Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, the changes in family roles brought about by the lack of regular work for women were recognised. For even where some day work was available to women, seasonal unemployment meant that they were often "laid up for the Winter" and became

a burthen upon the father of the family, and in many cases upon the parish. The wife is no longer able to contribute her share to the weekly expenses ... In a kind of despondency she sits down, unable to contribute anything to the general fund of the family, and conscious of rendering no other service to her family except that of the mere care of his family.(138)

The home of the agricultural labourer had indeed been turned 'upside down' but in a way that extended gender divisions of labour, almost anticipating the 'ideal' of the male breadwinner and the wholly domestic wife that was to be put forward as the model family form later in the century. But while issues relating to female employment were increasingly seen to be problematic in the industrial North, conditions in the rural areas of Suffolk and Norfolk led to a definition of female unemployment as a major issue of concern.

A general surplus of male labour combined with the seasonal labour requirements of cereal production meant that all too often male workers were also unemployed and families totally dependent on the poor rates. Even when men and women were fortunate enough to be in work, declining wage levels and rising costs (139) meant that family earnings were often inadequate to meet family needs and had to be supplemented from the poor rates - with a well-

documented rise in the parish poor rates in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries linked to a spiralling vicious circle wherein subsidy of wages depressed wage levels and where the employment of those on relief forced independent labourers onto the parish. In Suffolk, one of the worst counties for unemployment, the practice of subsidising wages became so pervasive that an investigation into the operation of poor relief found it "impossible to discover at what or at whose expense the land is cultivated". (140) And as expenditure on poor rates rose ever higher, efforts to provide regular work for women and children as an alternative to relief payments to the family were regarded with approval by Poor Law Commissioners. (141) The 1832 Commissioners may have expressed disapproval at what they understood to be the displacement of male by female labour, but in a situation of ever increasing poverty and ever rising poor rates, the employment of wives and daughters as independent field labourers was seen to be necessary, natural and perfectly acceptable. Social and political unrest in the factory districts of Lancashire may have led to a moral panic against the 'deviant' practice of employing women in factories, but in the economic, social and political context of rural Suffolk and Norfolk, such considerations were irrelevant. Rather



than calls for restrictions on the employment of women, the answer to the problems of rural society was seen to lie in an increase in their paid work. And the principle that all family members, men, women and children, had a part to play in reducing family dependence on poor relief was embedded in the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834.

If the payment of relief and priority in the provision of work gave families some protection against the worst effects of depression and underemployment, the unmarried, especially single women, were left particularly vulnerable. Though theoretically entitled to relief, single women were frequently paid a mere pittance or were denied relief altogether on the grounds that they were neither "members of families maintained by allowances, nor entitled to relief as distinct claimants on the grounds of lost time".(142) The intention was, as Pinchbeck pointed out, to force single women into domestic service, virtually the only occupation available to rural girls, and the efforts made to place single women in service - from payment of their wages from parish funds to the acceptance of rural girls as servants as an act of 'charity' (143) - endorses Richard's description of domestic service as a form of "disguised underemployment" (144) in the south-east. The single woman was, to put it simply,

'surplus' to local requirements.

For those unwilling or unable to enter domestic service, often the only viable alternative was marriage and, as statistics of falling marriage ages demonstrate, many saw marriage as "a defence against the unemployment that was increasingly the lot of women". (145) Even where women were able to find work, wage levels were so low that, as Hampson has argued, often "marriage at any price, or even illegitimate relations, seemed to women the only solution. (146) Indeed, where a woman's marriage removed parish liability for her maintenance, parish officials were quick to force marriages under the Bastardy Act of 1773 or even to bribe men into marrying "troublesome females" - and the apparent willingness with which women co-operated with parish authorities is clear evidence of, as Pinchbeck put it, "the straits to which women were reduced by the weakness of their economic and social position". (147) The situation envisaged by the female operatives of Todmorden, with "husband hunting" becoming a means "of escape from starvation", (148) had become the painful reality for many Norfolk and Suffolk girls.

Early marriage may have eased the immediate economic problems of the unmarried but the concomitant rise in the birth rate unmatched by any corresponding increase in employment (149) served

only to expand the over-abundant supply of agricultural labour with a self-sustaining impetus towards continuing under employment. With no local or regional alternatives to agricultural labour, (150) out-migration offered the only possible solution to the problem and parish-sponsored and voluntary emigration went some way towards alleviating local pressures, though often with a singular lack of enthusiasm on the part of farmers anxious to maintain a ready pool of labour (151). Despite such initiatives, however, and despite widespread advocacy of emigration, even forced emigration, as a solution to pauperism and high poor rates (152), rural poverty and ignorance coupled with widespread reliance on the highly localised system of settlement and relief operated as major disincentives to migration from the eastern counties in the early nineteenth century, and the over-supply of labour was maintained. Hopeless and helpless, the agricultural population of the two counties found itself trapped in an ever-diminishing, increasingly vicious circle and the poverty of labouring families grew ever more acute. By 1830, for example, 1,001 men (with 602 wives and 2,399 children) in the hundred of Blything in Suffolk were unemployed out of a male workforce of 2,500 to 3,000, including 3/4 of the men available for work in Framlingham. And in the pauper census of

1832, Cosford hundred was shown to have a pauper population of 4,100 out of a total population of 7,900 in 18 parishes. (153) Perhaps even more telling is the fact that labour surplus meant that even skilled workers such as horsemen and stockmen were casually employed by the week or day "or even - in Suffolk - by the hour". (154) The farm hand had become essentially a casual worker, to be hired and dismissed at the farmers' convenience. As the Rector of Whatfield told the Poor Law Commissioners in 1834, "the number of unemployed labourers is such that a farmer is always sure of hands when he wants them. It is cheaper to hire day labourers ... especially as they are always sent home on a rainy day". (155) But as attempts to alleviate unemployment and pauperism led to ever-higher poor rates, so pressure grew to reduce expenditure with a resulting decline in the value of allowances.

It was, in the words of Hobsbawm and Rude, "an explosive situation", (156) but only rarely, as in 1815, 1816 and 1822, was grievance expressed in open protest. (157) Then, in 1830-1831, a whole variety of local grievances found expression in the protests, riots and attacks on machinery and property that became collectively known as the 'Swing Riots'.

Deep-seated grievances were at the heart of protest, with a widening gulf between the workforce



and their social superiors marking the dismantling of the reciprocal ties of obligation that had justified the inequalities of the old social order. The attractions of landownership and increased profits, as the labourers understood the case, had led and were continuing to lead, landlords and large tenant farmers to enclose lands with an almost complete indifference to the needs of villagers and in denial of their customary rights. (158) Similarly, the substitution of short-term and insecure 'independent' wage labour for farm service signalled a disinclination on the part of employers to honour their 'moral' responsibilities towards their workers (159) yet with a continuing expectation of submission and deference from the labourers increasingly inappropriate to the impersonal relationships that marked the new economic order of things. Traditional mechanisms of social control had also been eroded, with the decline of farm service, larger farms and a tendency for farmers to take a more supervisory and managerial role distancing employer from employee. Social segregation was further increased as landowners and parish vestries 'closed' villages to limit settlement, forcing many labourers to live in the 'open' villages where they found the freedom and the opportunities to air grievances in shared antagonism against their employers. (160)

That open protest was sporadic and occasional is explained as much by the operation of the Old Poor Law as by any continuing sense of loyalty towards a given social order.(161) Examples of corruption, maladministration, and hardship undoubtedly existed and personal settlement became increasingly difficult to obtain as service declined, but in the 'miniature welfare states' of eighteenth century rural parishes filial obedience and loyalty represented a legitimate exchange for paternal protection.(162) But though the Speenhamland system and practices like sending labourers 'on the rounds' in search of work were largely well-intentioned reactions to the problems of unemployment and pauperism, (163) expedients designed to curtail the spiralling costs of relief - cuts in allowances to below the Speenhamland minimum, the levy of rates against the poor themselves and so forth - and corrupt practices fell heavily on the poor, with a gradual shift towards the substitution of coercion for protection. For when survival was dependent on relief, such dependence could operate to deny the expression of resentment and force a deferential and submissive 'loyalty'. The economic doctrines of laissez-faire had replaced paternalism as the determining principles of social organisation, leaving the agricultural workforce unprotected against the malevolent operation of the 'laws' of

supply and demand. But though unwilling to pay the price of paternalism, the ruling classes of agrarian society continued to expect - and exact - its rewards. (164) Lacking the bargaining power of skilled industrial workers and with collective action ruled out by rural isolation, the labourers turned to protest to press their claims and express their frustration and bitterness. This was the other side to the coin of paternalism and deference, for if pursuit of profit had led their social superiors to neglect their paternalist responsibilities to protect the labourers then it was legitimate to remind them of their obligations - if needs be by threats or even by open insurrection.

Riot was not entirely without its temporary gains, but riot also brought harsh retribution with swift reaction from the authorities rapidly restoring order. The new Whig ministry reacted to the Swing outbreaks with a forceful determination to restore public order and with the aid of the military, the Metropolitan police, and special constables insurrection was swiftly subdued. (165) Worse was to follow, however, and with their last scruples removed by a sense that the labourers had forfeited any rights to paternalistic protection, the leaders of rural society were ready to endorse any scheme, except the renunciation of their own privileged

position, which promised to reduce pauperism and subdue unrest.(166) The New Poor Law of 1834, with its coercive operation of imperatives towards 'independence' provided the ideal instrument for the achievement of these goals.

The Poor Law Amendment Act became law on July 1834 and was swiftly implemented in the Southern counties.(167) Apart from a new emphasis on centralisation, the new system retained many of the administrative features of the old, with the parish remaining the basic unit for assessment and collection of rates and for settlement and with a continuing reliance on local management of relief. (168) As events were to prove, however, the people of Norfolk and Suffolk had every reason to fear the implementation of the Act. Indoor relief in the workhouse was not new to the the region, (169) but the introduction of principles of 'less eligibility' were seen to be a further denial of the rights of working people for "fair maintenance" and "just allowances" when unable to obtain the 'fair work at fair wages' they sought. (170) In addition, the formation of Boards of Guardians to administer the new system placed control of poor relief very firmly in the hands of farmers, while the proposed replacement of out-relief by the 'less eligible' workhouse gave them an economic hold over the



labouring population that was open to serious abuse.  
(171)

As many farmers were aware, the labourers still held some power to resist exploitation. However large the workhouse, provision could not be made for the containment of all the poor of the union, and if all had agreed to enter the workhouse when required the farmers would have been forced to provide work at reasonable wages. This was in fact an argument put forward by the Commissioners and supporters of the New Poor Law, for as the costs of maintaining the poor in the workhouse were higher than the payment of wages adequate for subsistence, the value of labour would be enhanced, or so it was predicted, by the compulsion to raise wage levels. Thomas Campbell Foster's enquiry into conditions in Norfolk and Suffolk for The Times exposed the weaknesses of such predictions. The professed object of the New Poor Law was to ensure employment and secure adequate wages for the farm labourers he said,

In theory - on paper - carrying out principles with men as with machines - it seemed feasible: but in practice, men not being machines, or to be dealt with as such, it has wholly failed in effecting these objects. Its advocates said, 'adopt the principle of wholly refusing out-door relief to the able-bodied poor, but offer

them and their families the union house, and you will compel the farmers to employ them at sufficient wages to keep them; and as the cost of a family in the union-house will be much more than the man's wages out of it, to save their rates and to get his labour in return for their money, they will be induced to find him employment'. This is a very pretty theory. But it will be seen that it all rests on the able-bodied man with his family being willing to go into the union-house, if he be inadequately paid, or out of work. But if he be not so willing? Why, then the theory has a most sandy foundation.(172)

The theory did indeed have a sandy foundation and any fears that they might be forced to raise wages were quickly lost by the farmers. "The farmer's fear of the labourer's going into the workhouse is wholly dispelled now", wrote one local observer, "for he finds that rather than go there, he will submit to take any low wages that are offered him". (173) Instead of the predicted rise in earnings, weekly wage levels fell even further, to an average of 10s. 4d. in both counties by 1837. (174)

Weekly wages, however, give only a limited picture of family income levels; (175) they take no account of the casual and seasonal nature of much agricultural employment, of the heavy curtailment in allowances, and of the pittance earnings forced by

abuses of the system on the part of unscrupulous farmers and poor law officials. Those tricked out of assistance by false promises of work, or those forced to accept starvation rates under the ticket system and threats of the vagrancy laws, (176) would probably have been very happy to accept such wages. As one farmer told the 1837 Committee of Inquiry, "I could have as many men as I wanted, to do all my work at 1s. a day or 6s. a week'".(177) The Chairman of one Board of Guardians told the 1838 Committee: "He is a blockhead if he takes lower wages than will maintain himself and his family" (178) but the labourer was left with little choice but to be so. He was, so the joke had it, like a potato in a pit, to be stored in the workhouse until wanted for use. (179)

Though their grasp of the application of the laws of supply and demand on wage levels may have been at fault, in one instance the predictions of the Poor Law supporters were correct. Recognising that the reduction in economically productive work of women and of children was a contributory element in rural poverty, it was anticipated that withdrawal of allowances would be accompanied by an increase in the employment of women and children. A witness before the 1834 Commission, for example, suggested that farmers would not only pay reasonable wages to their

male workers but "by providing work for their wives and children also, would contrive to make the earnings of the family adequate to their support without any allowance from the parish". (180) The labourer, on the other hand, was also expected to demonstrate his 'independence' by making efforts to obtain work "not only for himself, but for his wife, and as many of his family as might be able to work ... seeing that nothing but the united efforts of all the family could then keep them out of the workhouse." (181) And, though, as we have seen, the farmers successfully resisted any temptation to raise wages, they were more disposed to profit from the cheap labour of women and children by providing task work for families (182) or other work for women and children. Their motives may sometimes have been more generous, and the Suffolk farmer who took on the wife and son of his labourer to prevent the family going to the workhouse may have been prompted to do so by compassion for the family. But for the cost of an extra 5s.6d. a week he was able to secure the 'loyal' services of an adult woman and a twelve year old boy as well as retain his adult male labourer at low wages. (183). Marx wrote,

for the farmer there is no more ingenious method of keeping his labourers well below the normal level, and yet of always having



an extra hand ready for extra work, of extracting the greatest possible amount of labour with the least possible amount of money.(184)

This was indeed the case. For though the earnings of women and children were an essential element in family incomes, their availability as cheap labour reinforced the poverty trap in which labouring families were held. Gender divisions of labour remained relatively firm in the eastern cereal growing districts limiting female 'competition' for 'male' tasks, but the so-called 'supplementary' earnings of women and children allowed married men to be employed at less than subsistence wages.(185) The earnings of women and children had, in this sense, replaced the allowances formerly paid from the poor rates - to the economic benefit of the farmers.

Literary evidence apart,(186), there is little firm evidence from which the extent of the increase in women's work in agriculture after 1834 can be gauged; the essentially casual and seasonally erratic nature of the work they did made it largely invisible and statistical evidence seems to have severely underestimated the size of the female 'hidden workforce' (187). Similarly, the actual amount of women's earnings is impossible to quantify as this depended on individual capacity, on domestic

commitments, the nature, amount and duration of the work available as well as rates of pay. In general terms, women seem to have been paid at around half male rates in 1843 and it seems reasonable to assume that daily rates of 8d. in Norfolk and Suffolk or 1s. 6d for task work were little altered from those paid in the 1830s. (188) The results of a questionnaire circulated among farmers in the two counties in the later 1830s showed women directly employed by the farmers as being paid an average of 4s. 4d. per week, with harvest 'earnings' of just over 17s. 10d for a woman, rising to just over 26s. 9d. for a woman and four children. (189)

The nature of the survey suggests, however, that these women and children were directly employed by the farmers concerned and the wage levels indicated here may give a false impression of earnings. With only a limited amount of work locally available to women and children, many of those seeking work were forced to rely on casual and seasonal work or to find employment with the labour 'gangs', a system of subcontracting labour which first appeared around the 'open' parish of Castle Acre in Norfolk around 1826 and grew in response to a demand for labour on large farms in 'closed' parishes in the locality. While the system brought great economic benefits to the farmer and advantages to the gang master it brought enormous

hardship to those unfortunate enough to be thus employed, with low wages being a small reward for long hours of hard physical labour and long journeys to and from the place of work. (190) As Mr. Denison aptly described the gang system in his report to the 1843 Commission on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, it was "a mode of getting out of them (the workers) the greatest possible amount of labour in a given time for the smallest amount of pay". (191) But with the loss of allowances after 1834 and with limited opportunities for employment, many women and children (and sometimes men) were forced to take work with the gangs - to the greater economic advantage of the farmers. The contribution of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 to the rapid expansion of this highly exploitative system across eastern England was recognised in the 1843 Report;

One of the prime causes of the increase of the gang-system (I may almost say its origin) was the New Poor Law, for previous to that Act, if an able-bodied man could not support his family, the parish assisted him: that assistance being withdrawn, it became necessary that all who could work should support themselves. (192)

Yet as far as the majority of the farmers, landowners and rural ruling classes were concerned

the New Poor Law was a success. Though the 'thoroughness' with which the new system was meant to be applied was gradually lessened as it was realised that the total abolition of out-relief to the able-bodied was not only unrealistic, it was also more costly, (193) the cost of poor relief to ratepayers was substantially reduced. Thus in Norfolk, for example, the decrease in aggregate expenditure on the relief and maintenance of the poor between 1834 and 1840 was 41 per cent and from an average expenditure per head of 15s.9d. in 1834, payments had reduced to 9s.3d. in 1840. (194) That the real costs of poverty had been displaced on to the shoulders of the poor themselves mattered hardly a jot - self dependency was to be applauded - the Act had achieved one of its principle objectives by this reduction in the rates.

A further objective of the Act, was to instil habits of 'independence' in the labour force; a euphemistic use of the term meaning, in reality, almost the exact opposite, and with Senior's description of the New Poor Law as a "system of police and secondary punishment by which the present semi-Irish system of intimidation may be checked" making plain the coercive intentions expressed therein. (195) As an instrument of social control, the Act was also proclaimed to be a success, with



enthusiastic statements of its supposed achievement of "an improved relation between master and man".(196) A witness to the 1838 Commission, for example, spoke of "the wonderful change that has taken place in so short a time; a moral and physical revolution, which is scarcely to be credited", and Kay was delighted to see that "the just and natural relation between the master and the servant" had been restored.(197) No doubt, when the alternative was no work or the workhouse, the labourers quickly learned to express the required 'respect' but as other, more perceptive observers recognised, the 'respect' exhibited by the labourers was enforced rather than felt. "It has been stated by the labourers ", said another witness to the 1838 Committee, "that the masters cannot wish them well when they want them to be driven into the workhouse ... when they have no work ... The men now had to be more submissive than they used to be ... and the masters knew it".(198) To borrow the words of Patrick Joyce, exploitation had acted on poverty and defeat "to produce acquiescence, and a kind of enforced deference, calculating, grudging, and playing rather more on the surface of behaviour than working at its centre".(199)

The point must be stressed again, however, that the paid work of women was not defined in any way as a 'problem' and neither employers nor workers nor even

the 'social arbiters' of the local community raised any objections - economic, cultural or moral - to the employment of women in field work at this point. Not only were the earnings of women and children essential to the family economy, the absence of these 'supplementary' earnings would quickly have exposed the weaknesses of the workhouse system as an instrument of social control. In direct contrast to the situation in Lancashire, the employment of women was an integral part of the 'solution' to social, economic and political problems.

But as the events of the 1840s were to show, claims that social relations had been 'improved' and problems had been solved were premature. With their 'rights' sacrificed to the interests of their social superiors, demoralised, if not quite defeated, "a new breed of labourer, sullen to a point unknown to their forefathers" (200) turned to covert protest to express their bitterness and alienation and a new era of antagonistic social relations was begun in Suffolk and Norfolk.

## Conclusion

In rural Norfolk and Suffolk, as in the industrial North, events in the early decades of the nineteenth century had indeed turned the world 'upside down'. Under the economic imperatives of capitalism the old customary ways had finally given way to a new order of things - with male and female dependence on wages earned in the factories and fields or from 'sweated' labour replacing the semi-independent family-based labour that was the memory, if not always the reality, of the 'golden age' that had been lost. And with the changes precipitated by the reorganisation of production also came the transition from the hierarchical and paternalistic cultures of the old order to the tensions and anxieties presented by the vertical antagonisms of the new class society.

As has been shown, a variety of experiences and responses were contained within these broad and protracted processes of change. From the initially conservative and functional responses of groups like the agricultural labourers in Norfolk and Suffolk and the redundant hand-loom weavers, seeking to remind their social superiors of their obligations towards working people in dire distress, to the more radical, often aggressive affirmation of independent social, economic and political rights by other groups, the

whole gamut of human responses to change was exhibited. A variety of consequences were also experienced; from the abject poverty of those de-skilled by technological innovations or surplus to labour requirements to the relative prosperity of those with scarce and marketable skills. In contemporary opinion, probably one of the most significant - and unwelcome - consequences of change in the organisation of production was the 'unnatural' reversal of gender divisions of labour in the factory districts of the North, with a consequent neglect of home and family on the part of women that was seen to be threatening the very foundations of civilised English society.

The furore created by the supposed evils of the factory system and of the dissolute factory female contrasts rather strangely with the view that a prime solution to the economic and social problems of Suffolk and Norfolk was the employment of married women in independent labour away from the home environment. What would maintain the family in one region was seen to threaten its very foundations in another. This anomaly reveals others, with a degree of similarity between the experiences of women, particularly of women with family commitments, in both regions obscured by the powerful mythology surrounding the anti-factory polemic. Married women



in both regions, for example, organised paid labour around the demands of family and home, taking what casual, generally ill-paid work was available and fitting it in around child-care and domestic labour. Married women did not normally work in the factories, as Dr. Mitchell reported to the 1833 Commission,

The greatest number of females (employed) is in the period sixteen to twenty-one years of age, but there is a prodigious diminution immediately after: and who can be at loss to tell the cause? - it is the period when they marry. This is ... notorious to all the world ... it is well known by the returns, as well as from the evidence given to the district commissioners, that very few women work in the factories after marriage. (201)

If anything there was a greater degree of dislocation to the organisation of family life in Suffolk and Norfolk with wives losing their traditional by-employments in textiles and family-based agricultural production and forced to seek work away from the domestic environment. And if the unmarried factory girl was exposed to the 'moral' dangers consequent on 'independent' employment in the factory, what of the single female agricultural worker displaced from the familial environment of farm service into field labour or exposed to the 'moral' dangers of extreme poverty? (202) Clearly the novelty of female factory

work attracted rather more attention than the customary area of farm work, and the mistaken perception that the factory girl had deprived fathers and husbands of work that was rightfully theirs, thereby exacerbating social tensions in the industrial districts. The argument is, of course, disingenuous. The factory work of women was condemned, not because of the realities of the situation, but because of the power of the myths that surrounded it, and it is in the origins of those myths that the real significance of gender issues may be exposed; in the intersections between issues of gender and those of power and control.

Thus changes in the socio-economic roles of rural women in the East of England were not seen to be problematic per se, because gender divisions neither offered, nor were seen to offer, any economic or broadly 'political' advantages to competing groups. As has been argued, technological innovation presented only limited opportunities for women to replace male labour, and though they worked for much lower wages any reduction in wage bills had to be offset against the costs of relief to men with families. Labour surplus removed any need to erode skills that might give workers any control over the labour process or to pursue divide and rule strategies, setting female against male workers. On

the worker side, there was little to be gained, apart from a little extra irregular employment and probably a net loss in income, (203) from any further extensions of divisions of labour. In preserving gender divisions of labour, the recruitment of the agricultural workforce remained congruent with the traditional value systems of families, but changes in the organisation of production did present "an array of threats to the family's traditional organisation", did over-ride the cultural values that located women as joint earners within the family context, and did provoke "an avalanche of disturbance" in the Norfolk and Suffolk countryside. (204) But in flexing their collective muscle in opposition to the new order of things the agricultural labourers had demonstrated weaknesses that underlined their essential vulnerability. With acquiescence ensured by forceful coercion supplemented by the economic 'policing' of the New Poor Law, there was simply no need to seek accommodation with the workforce. Class struggle had been firmly subdued - or so it was thought - and issues of gender could be left undisturbed.

The essential difference between the situation in the rural East and the industrial North was that utilisation of gender divisions of labour and of the cultural values of patriarchy gave power - to threaten, to undercut, to impose, to bargain, to gain

support - to both manufacturers and workers seeking control over the processes of production. As we have seen, the employment of women as cheap labour in outwork and as machine operators maximised profits through cost cutting and attacked the skills-based monopolies of male occupational groups. On the worker side, however, exploitation of gender divisions and cultural values was seen to support the position of 'skilled' male labour within the factories and, ultimately, the well-being of the working classes overall, with expression of the cultural values of patriarchy giving a moral imperative to claims resonant with the values and anxieties of contemporary society. And in seeking alliance with the industrial working classes against the encroachment of the Liberals and Radicals, the Tories also recognised the political mileage to be gained from issues of gender in establishing common cause with workers and exploiting public anxieties and insecurities towards support for the paternalistic, traditional and familial values they espoused. In both regions changes in the organisation of production had provoked tensions in relation to the organisation of family life and traditional cultural values, but only in the industrial regions of the North, where gender divisions of labour and patriarchal values were vulnerable to exploitation by



the powerful in furtherance of their own economic, social or political ends, did issues of gender become highly visible, and high profile concerns.

In Norfolk and Suffolk the developing class antagonisms of the early nineteenth century saw an identity of class interests uniting men and women of the rural proletariat in common cause against the ruling and employing classes of the region. In the industrial North, however, class consciousness took a gendered form, to give a gender-based as well as a social-class dimension to struggles between different social groups. The degree to which these struggles and these dimensions informed the purposes of education and the provision of schooling in the early nineteenth century is explored in the next chapter.

## Notes

1. Rule has argued, for example, that the 1834 Poor Law marks a new era. Rule, J., The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England, London, 1986, p.390.
2. Richards, E., 'Women in the British Economy Since about 1700: an Interpretation', History, 59, 1974, p.242-3. Roberts, E., Women's Work 1840-1940, Basingstoke, 1988, p.20-21.
3. Berg, op.cit., p.145-6.
4. Ibid, p.17-18; Alexander, 'Women's Work', p.38.
5. See, for example, Berg's discussion of 'custom and community in domestic manufacture and the trades'. Berg, ibid, pp.158-175.
6. Beechey, 'Women and Production', p.130-131.
7. Pinchbeck, op.cit., pp.121-126.
8. This was a phrase used by a witness to the 1806 Royal Commission on the woollen industry. Alexander, op.cit., p.139.
9. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.157.
10. Ure, A., The Cotton Manufacture of Great Britain, London, 1836, volume 1, p.189.  
This is a generalisation. As Berg has said, households were complex and varied and journeymen, apprentices and relatives could also be employed in production. Women also worked as weavers and might live in all female households of young women. Berg, ibid, pp.154, 150.
11. Berg, ibid, p.140.
12. Ibid, p.236-7; Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.245.
13. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.151.
14. Berg, op.cit., p.255.
15. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.148
16. Friefield, op.cit., p.333-4.
17. Berg, op.cit., p.265.

18. It is possible that physically stronger workers were able to produce a greater quantity of yarn and were, therefore, more profitable to employ. Friefield suggests this was the case for the longer mules in use in the 1830s. Friefield, op.cit., p.335.
19. Scott-Taggart, 1927, in Berg, op.cit., p.256.
20. Berg, op.cit., p.256; Friefield, op.cit., p.333.
21. John Redman, a former spinner, felt that the spinners exercised a common authority "as fathers" within the factory. Report of the Factories Inquiry Commission, P.P. 1833, XX, p.655. Smelser, N., Social Change and the Industrial Revolution, Chicago, 1959, pp.90-1. Tilly, L., and Scott, J., Women, Work and Family, London, 1978, pp.112-3.
22. Not all were employed directly by the spinners but the great majority were. In 1834, for example, in 131 cotton mills 8,883 workers under 18 were employed by the spinners while the employers recruited only 731. Smelser, op.cit., p.201.
23. Lazonick, W., quoted by Hall, C., 'The Working-Class Family in Cotton Textiles', in Whitelegge, E., et al, op.cit., p.22.
24. P.P. 1833 XX, D1, p.79.
25. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.152.
26. Thompson, E.P., op.cit., p.309.
27. Ibid, p.315.
28. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.160-1.
29. Ibid, p.165.
30. Ibid, p.166-7.
31. Glen, R., Urban Workers in the Early Industrial Revolution, Beckenham, 1984, p.145. Thompson. E.P., op.cit., p.318.
32. Ibid, pp.210, 328.
33. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.188. Even as late as the 1830s, the number of hand weavers greatly outnumbered those employed in the factories.

Indeed, their numbers increased, possibly because declining wage rates forced all family members to assist with production. In 1824 there were around 210,000 hand weavers (45,000 power weavers) and 213,00 in 1833 (73,000 power weavers). Berg, op.cit., p.259.

34. P.P. 1843, XXVIII, p.19.
35. Gaskell, P., The Manufacturing Population of England, London, 1833, p.184-5.
36. A letter to Lord Ashley quoted by Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.194.
37. Roberts, E., op.cit., p.35; Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.187. 57% of cotton workers were female by mid-century, but only 22% of woollen textile workers. Roberts, ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Unlike the case in spinning, the manufacturers tended to recruit the majority of workers. In 151 cotton mills in Lancashire in 1834, for example, the mill masters recruited 3,524 of under 18 year olds in weaving, and the weavers recruited only 1,714. Smelser, op.cit., p.201.
40. Engels, F., The Condition of the Working Class in England, 1892, 1969 edition, pp.171, 173.
41. They resented the loss of independence forced on all workers by the time/work disciplines of the factory and the 'abuse' of machinery.  
Thompson argues that the weavers' support for the ten hour agitation was based on general goals and not directed specifically against women workers.

it was intrinsic to their alternative model of political economy that shorter hours in the factory should at one and the same time lighten the labour of children, give a shorter working day to the adult operatives, and spread the available work more widely amongst the hand-workers and the unemployed.

The weavers clearly felt, however, that the factory work of women deprived men of their rightful labour and they protested against:

The adaptation of machines, in every improve,ment, to children, and youth, and



women, to the exclusion of those who ought to labour - THE MEN. (original emphasis)  
 Report and Resolutions of a meeting of deputies from the hand-loom worsted weavers residing in and near Bradford, Leeds, Halifax etc., 1835.  
 Thompson, E. P., op.cit., pp.335-7.

42. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.178; Thomis, M., and Grimmett, J., Women in Protest 1800-1850, London, 1982, p.70.
43. Women weavers joined unions and were active in the hand-weavers' strike of 1801. Thomis and Grimmett suggest, however, that male hand-weavers subsequently became hostile to women in the trade and were determined to exclude them from their organisations. Ibid, p.73-4.
44. Pinchbeck, op.cit., pp.177-8.
45. Thompson, op.cit., pp.306-7, 331-4.
46. The period between 1788 and 1803 was described by Radcliffe as "the golden age of this great trade", but as Thompson has pointed out, "experience and myth are here intermingled ... probably only a handful of weavers attained Radcliffe's standard; but many aspired towards it". Ibid, pp.307, 338-40. Perceptions of a 'golden age' would have also have extended beyond economics, to include social and cultural dimensions.
47. Complaints of this nature were voiced to parliamentary committees from 1812. Osterud, N., 'Sex, Skill and Status: Gender Divisions in the Leicestershire Hosiery Industry', in John, A., (Ed.), op.cit., p.55.
48. Ibid, p.52.
49. There was a powerful mixed association of spinners in the 1790s, which had rules giving women members equal rights over apprenticeship. Strike action against women workers (and against piece-work rates) took place in 1810 and 1818. Women who took part in the Lancashire strike of 1818 were subsequently expelled from the union. Thomis and Grimmett, op.cit., p.73; Berg, op.cit., p.256; Liddington, J., and Norris, J., One Hand Tied Behind Us: the Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement, London, 1978, 1985 edition, p.51.

50. Liddington and Norris, ibid; Thomis and Grimmett, op.cit., p.69-70.
51. Friefield, op.cit., pp.334-5.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid, p.335-6.
54. Ibid.
55. Doherty said to The Select Committee on the Combination of Workmen, 1838, that an apprenticeship system did not "exist formally, but it does frightfully to the workmen". Alexander, 'Women, Class ...', p.144.
56. Smelser, op.cit., p.241.
57. Ibid. This argument has been attacked by Anderson on the demographic grounds that few spinners would have had sufficient children of the right age to work as their piecers. Anderson, M., 'Sociological History and the Working-Class Family: Smelser Revisited', Social History, 3, October, 1976.
58. Taylor, op.cit., p.104
59. Ibid, p.113.
60. Ibid, p.110.
61. Smelser, op.cit., p.239; Alexander, op.cit., pp.137-40; Rose, S., 'Gender, at Work: Sex, Class and Industrial Capitalism', History Workshop, 21, Spring 1986, pp.120-122.
62. By 'structural' strikes, Smelser meant those which were provoked by pressures on family organisation. Smelser, op.cit., p.231.
63. Thomis and Grimmett, op.cit., p.73.
64. Smelser, op.cit., p.237. Wage rates were to be protected, however, by giving female spinners the assistance of the confederation in seeking to obtain 'men's prices' for their work, or at least "such remuneration for their labour as may be deemed sufficient". Liddington and Norris, op.cit., p.51.
65. Thomis and Grimmett, op.cit., p.70; Lewenhak, S., Women and Work, Glasgow, 1980, p.177.

66. Taylor, op.cit., p.114.
67. Quoted in Hewitt, M., Wives and Mothers in Victorian Industry, London, 1958, p.3. The concept of the 'family wage', jointly earned by all members of the family, was also shared by other classes. Nassau Senior, for example, "routinely included in his calculations of family income, the wages of the married labourer, those of his wife and unemancipated children. Tilly and Scott, op.cit., p.128.
68. Seccombe, op.cit., p.66.
69. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.122.
70. Seccombe, ibid, p.65.
71. It is likely that many factory workers were recruited from the ranks of former agricultural workers and servants. Anderson, op.cit., p.326.
72. Quoted by Smelser, op.cit., p.232.
73. Taylor, op.cit., p.107.
74. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.197.
75. Thomis and Grimmett, op.cit., p.75.
76. Alexander, op.cit., p.144.  
 In an editorial in The Herald of the Rights of Industry in May 1834, Doherty commented on the "dastardly strategem" of "running the labour of women against the men in the race of the tailoring competition". He went on,  
  
 One of our earliest endeavours must be to root out this abominable principle of degrading the labour of females in order to destroy the value of the males ... What is the antidote? Why merely for you to acknowledge the natural equality of women; include them in all your schemes of improvement and rise them as high in the scale of sense and independence as yourself.  
 Quoted by Taylor, op.cit., p.318, n.145. Alexander sees Doherty's "prevarications" as being typical of "the equivocation of political discourse of working-class movements on the question of female labour". Alexander, ibid.
77. Taylor, op.cit., p.114.

78. Ibid, pp.114-5.
79. Perkin, op.cit, pp.218-252. The 'ideals' identified by Perkin are exclusively male.
80. Thompson, op.cit., p.374.
81. Perkin, op.cit., p.156; Smelser, op.cit, pp.238-30.
82. Thompson, op.cit., p.379.
83. Ibid, p.376.
84. Ibid, p.889.
85. Ibid, p.379.
86. Perkin, op.cit., p.243.
87. Ibid, p.250.
88. These were the essential elements of Sadler's 'paternal System'. Roberts, D., Paternalism in Early Victorian England, London, 1979, p.26.
89. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.95, n.5; Smelser, op.cit., p.290.
90. Kay, J.P., The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester, 1832, pp.9-12.
91. Gaskell, P., Artisans and Machinery, London, 1836, p.89.
92. Roberts, D., op.cit., p.173.
93. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.198.
94. Ibid, p.197.
95. Perkin, op.cit., p.151.
96. P.P. 1833, XX, p.E13.
97. Smelser, op.cit., p.292; Thompson, op.cit., p.372.
98. Perkin, op.cit., pp.221-30, 252-70.
99. Ibid, p.268.



100. Smelser, op.cit., pp.240-1, 244, 266, 294-9. By 1839, 146,331 females were employed in the cotton factories. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.196,n.2.
101. Quoted by Thomis and Grimmett, op.cit., p.72.
102. This paragraph draws on Roberts' discussion of the basic assumptions underlying paternalism, though the implications for the roles of women that are suggested here are my own arguments.
103. Mill, J.,Essay on Government, 1821, quoted by Taylor, op.cit., p.293, n.48.
104. Quoted by ibid, p.33.
105. Ibid, p.82-3.
106. Ibid, p.96.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid, p.97.
109. Ibid, pp.107-8.
110. Ibid, p.112.
111. Thomis and Grimmett, op.cit., pp.28-47, 79; Taylor, op.cit., p.89.
112. Thomis and Grimmett, op.cit., p.81.
113. See, for example, Mc.Calman, I., 'Females, Feminism and Free Love in an Early Nineteenth-Century Radical Movement', Labour History, 38, 1980, in ibid, p.99.
114. Ibid.
115. Ibid; Thompson, D. 'Women and Nineteenth-Century Radical Politics: A Lost Dimension', in Mitchell, J., and Oakley, A., op.cit., p.117.
116. Taylor, op.cit., p.81; Thomis and Grimmett, op.cit., pp.50-1, 71.
117. Taylor, op.cit., p.80; Rendall, J., Introduction to Rendall, J., (Ed.), Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914, Oxford, 1987, p.5.
118. Quoted by Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.199-100.
119. Roberts, E., op.cit., p.20.

120. Female factory workers were relatively well paid, but their youth, and the assumption that their wages were essentially supplementary earnings, meant that few earned high wages per se. The 1833 Commission drew up a table of Lancashire factory women's average weekly wages which showed a wage of slightly above 9s.8d. as the highest paid. A comparable male wage was just over 22s.8d. Pinchbeck, op.cit., pp.191-193.
121. In Lancashire cotton factories (and textile factories in general), the majority of female workers were aged between 16 and 21. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.197-8.
122. Berg, op.cit., p.45.
123. Snell, op.cit., p.63; Higgs, E., 'Women, Occupations and Work in the Nineteenth-Century Censuses', History Workshop, Spring, 1987, pp.74-5.
124. Snell, op.cit., p.185-6.
125. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.43.
126. Ibid, p.156.
127. Report from the Select Committee on Agricultural Labourers' Wages, P.P. 1824, VI, p.399.
128. P.P. 1843, XII, p.220.
129. Snell, op.cit., pp.81-2, 94-5.
130. Ibid, p.84, 158.
131. See chapter 2. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.53.
132. Snell, op.cit., p.61.
133. Ibid, p.49-50.
134. Ibid, p.56.
135. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.76.
136. Ibid
137. Quoted by Snell, op.cit., p.56.
138. Quoted by Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.59.

139. Structural unemployment in Norfolk and Suffolk, high poor rates, and depressed rural industries led to the lowest money wages in the early nineteenth century of all south-eastern counties examined by Snell. Snell, op.cit., p.37-8.
140. P.P. 1834 XXVIII, p.344.
141. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.77.
142. Report of the Poor Law Commission, 1835, quoted by ibid, p.80.
143. Ibid.
144. Richards, op.cit., p.348.
145. Snell, op.cit., pp.348, 210-17. Average ages for marriage in Suffolk between 1837-51 were 24.8 years for men and 22.8 years for women. Jones, D. Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth-Century Britain, London, 1982, p.36.
146. Quoted by Snell, op.cit., p.349,n.77.
147. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.83.
148. The Examiner 26/2/1832, quoted by Pinchbeck, op.cit., pp. 199-200.
149. Hobsbawm, E., and Rude, G., Captain Swing, 1959, p.42; Snell, op.cit., p.210-11.
150. Snell, op.cit., p.131.
151. Horn, P., The Rural World, 1780-1850: Social Change in the English Countryside, London, 1980, pp.106-7; Snell, op.cit., pp.11-112, 339; Charlesworth A., in Charlesworth A., (Ed.), An Atlas of Rural Protest, Beckenham, 1983, p.143.
152. Snell, ibid. There is a certain irony in the fact that the 'evils' of factory work were seen to be a great deal less when measured against the payment of out relief. See, for example, the case of Mrs.Bowler, a widow threatened with the withdrawal of out-relief unless she went to the factories or allowed her three daughters to be sent. P.P.1837-8, XVIII, p.48.
153. Hobsbawm and Rude, op.cit., p.72.
154. Thirsk, J., and Imray, J., Suffolk Farming in the Nineteenth Century, in ibid, p.44.

155. Quoted by ibid, p.25.
156. Ibid, p.83.
157. See, for example, Jones, D.,op.cit., pp.14-18 for a discussion of the relationship between crime and protest.
158. Hobsbawm and Rude, op.cit., p.147-8; Snell, op.cit., p.222.
159. Following Thompson, Snell has argued that settlement was regarded as "a peculiar privilege of the poor", and that their attitudes to yearly hiring "formed a consistent part of those moral economy values". These expectations became moral when economic circumstances outgrew them. Snell, op.cit., p.99-100.
160. Charlesworth, op.cit., p.138.
161. Snell, op.cit., p.104; Wells, R.A.E, in Rule, J.op.cit., p.354.
162. Snell, op.cit., pp.75-7; Horn, op.cit., p.99.
163. Snell, op.cit., p.109.
164. Rule, op.cit., p.354-5.
165. Horn, op.cit., p.93.
166. Henriques,U.,Before the Welfare State: Social Administration in Early Industrial Britain, London, 1979, pp.22-3, 42, 54; Horn, op.cit., pp.109-10.
167. Malthusian economics conflicted with the paternalistic principles embodied in the Old Poor Law to give weight to the view that the payment of relief encouraged the indolence, improvidence and personal inadequacy that was the root cause of poverty. 'Evidence' that the Swing riots had been sparked off by the maladministration of relief and that the worst riots had taken place where relief payments were at their highest supported the view that the New Poor Law was a constructive instrument for social reform. The new system was, therefore, first implemented in an area roughly coinciding with the counties associated with the Swing disturbances. Trade recession, and vigorous resistance delayed its implementation in the



- industrial north. Henriques, ibid; Snell, op.cit., pp.110-114.
168. Digby, A., 'The Labour Market and Continuities of Social Policy after 1834: the Case of the Eastern Counties', Economic History Review, XXVIII, 1975.
  169. Area workhouses serving unions of parishes were established in Norfolk and Suffolk after 1756 under Gilbert's Act. Digby, A., Pauper Palaces, London, 1978, p.32.
  170. Snell, op.cit., p.132.
  171. Ibid, p.116.
  172. 'Inquiry into Incendiary Fires', The Times, 15/6/1844, in ibid, p.127.
  173. Quoted by Jones, D., op.cit., p.45.
  174. In Norfolk, for example, weekly wage levels had fallen by an average of 10d. by 1837. Snell suggests that 1833 wage levels were atypically low, thus masking the real sharpness of the decline in wage levels. Snell, op.cit., pp.128-30.
  175. 'Average' wages were likely to be earned only by those in regular work on larger farms. Fox, W., in Samuel, R., (Ed.), Village Life and Labour, 1975, p.6.
  176. Snell, op.cit., pp.119-20, 124; Horn, op.cit., p.119.
  177. P.P. 1837-8, XVIII.2, p.231.
  178. Snell, op.cit., p.124.
  179. This was a 'joke' of long standing, Thompson, E.P. op.cit., p.247.
  180. Report on the Poor Laws 1834, XXIX, p.297a, in Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.84.
  181. P.P. 1834, XXVIII, p.683a, in ibid.
  182. Ibid, pp.86, 91.
  183. Ibid, p.86, n.1.

184. Marx, Capital, quoted by Samuel, op.cit., p.24, n.40.
185. The ideal of the male breadwinner wage was not held by labouring families at this point, though they did expect to be paid a 'fair' wage. See the Norfolk labourers' objections to the payment of allowances in kind to supplement wages. Digby, op.cit., p.226.
186. Poor Law reports, for example, contain remarks regarding "the great addition of females working abroad". Pinchbeck, op.cit., pp.85-6.
187. Miller, C., 'The Hidden Workforce: Female Field Workers in Gloucester 1870-1901', Southern History, 6, 1984. Higgs, op.cit., pp.74-5.
188. Report on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, pp.166, 186. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.95.
189. Ibid, p.96. Harvest earning were based on the value of the corn gleaned. In a family with four children, only half the family income was earned by the man. Ibid.
190. Ibid, p.88. Ketteringham, J. 'Country Work Girls in Nineteenth-Century England' in Samuel, R. (Ed.), op.cit.
191. P.P. 1843, XII, p.224.
192. Ibid, p.280.
193. It was estimated that the cost of maintaining a family in the workhouse was double that of a male labourer's wage. Henriques, op.cit., p.64, n.124.
194. Horn op.cit., p.128.
195. Snell, op.cit., pp.121, 124.
196. Ibid, p.114.
197. Ibid, p.115.
198. Ibid, p.122.
199. Joyce, P., op.cit., p.79.
200. Rule, J., op.cit., p.361.

201. P.P.1834, XIX, p.38.
202. See, for example, the suggestion made to the 1867 Commission of Inquiry that women should be excluded from field work, and the reponse. P.P. 1867-8, XVII, p.300.
203. See, for example, how the administration of relief changed as workhouse facilities became swamped and the costs of poor relief rose in in the 1840s and 1850s. Digby, op.cit., pp.109-114.
204. Smelser, op.cit., p.239.

The Purposes and Provision of Education for the Lower Orders: girls' access to schooling in the early nineteenth century

In this chapter the discussion turns to a specific focus on the interaction between patriarchal values and the purposes of education, and between gender divisions of labour and the provision and take up of schooling. The continuing theme of patriarchy as a fundamental principle of social organisation is employed to broaden the context of the discussion to include the educative influence of family and community values and behaviours, and to provide an interpretative perspective on the utilisation of mass schooling both as a means of class-cultural control and transformation, (1) and as a source of what the working-classes saw to be really useful knowledge for their daughters.

Two basic questions provide the organisational framework for the discussion. These are, firstly, what were the purposes of educating the sons and daughters of the poor seen to be? and secondly, how did these purposes find expression in practices, particularly as regards the provision of educational facilities within the identified regions? Neither question is singular in its focus; each encompasses many dimensions to include a whole variety of



viewpoints on the merits or otherwise of educating the children of the working population, with attention to the enormous variety in educational provision over time and place and, of course, to variations related to gender.

The inclusion of a variety of perspectives, however, no matter how broadly based, does not provide an infallible safeguard against errors of interpretation. Simply to 'add on' a range of alternative viewpoints to an interpretative framework derived from the expressed intentions of those with the power and authority to make their voices heard, for example, is to give an importance to particular perspectives that may not have been justified by developments. Similarly, there is a temptation to assume a straightforward causal relationship between intent and practice and practice and effect, (2) to outline policy statements and to trace their 'translation' into provision with no attempt to explore the presence of gaps between ideals and policies and the realities of experiences or to disentangle the complexities of cause and effect. (3) Stephens has warned that "the nature and experience of elementary education varied so much from place to place that to talk of a national condition is to distort reality", (4) hence the emphasis given in the chapter heading to the question of girls' access to

schooling. For it was the many and varied causes and consequences of local practices that were crucial in determining girls' access to schooling, and to broader educational experiences. It is the exploration of these factors, therefore, that provides the central subject matter of this chapter.

The points made above have been influential also in the organisation of this and the following chapter. For while it might have been simpler to have organised this chapter as 'background' material, outlining statements of intent and tracing their implementation via the mechanics, range and extent of local educational provision, such an approach would have been vulnerable to 'distortions of realities' in omitting factors of family and community life that were crucial in mediating attitudes towards, and access to, formal schooling. It would, in short, risk giving insufficient attention to the socio-economic and cultural context of working-class experiences and thus deny the interactive, overlapping and often untidy nature of educational developments. Rather than 'background' therefore, the chapter is complementary to chapter 4, where issues such as curriculum, implicitly introduced here in the context of educational purposes, are reconsidered and extended through discussion of the schools in action.

### The Purposes of Schooling.

Notwithstanding the interest in educating the poor that was expressed in the charity school 'movement' in the early part of the eighteenth century, (5) the idea that a period of formal schooling should be a normal experience for the children of the lower orders was only very rarely entertained as a necessary or practical proposition. The family provided all, or the greater part of the knowledge and skills considered to be necessary for adult life and the more formal education provided by schooling and apprenticeships (6) was essentially supplementary or, as in the case of orphans or the very poor, a substitute for familial education. To suggest, however, as did Hans, that "among the lower orders 'home education' meant no education at all" (7) is to apply a narrow, historically inappropriate definition of education as the acquisition of literacy skills and 'book learning', normally acquired through formal schooling. Indeed, as Cobbett's distinction between 'real' education ("bringing up", a concern with "everything with regard to the mind as well as the body of the child") and 'Heddekashun' ("taking boys and girls away from their father's and mother's houses and sending them to what is called a school") (8) illustrates, there are important distinctions to

be made between historical, class and cultural perceptions of the meaning of 'education'. Thus, for example, for labouring families in the eighteenth century, education, work, family and community life were normally synonymous, with children learning the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours appropriate to their adult roles through interaction with their parents, kin and community members and from "the social circumstances of everyday life". (9)

Children also may have gone to school, and in Lancashire the sons, if not the daughters of weaving families stood quite a good chance of doing so. (10) But even those who did not attend a school were not necessarily denied the opportunity to acquire literacy skills. At Shaw, for example, "the children are taught at home by their parents, weavers and other artists", and for Samuel Bamford this sort of "daily fireside education" included being taught the alphabet by his father, (11) an experience shared by a Heptonstall weaver who also learned "reading, writing and arithmetic" from his father during breaks in work, and also, no doubt by many others. (12) Certainly rising literacy levels during the first part of the century, for all the weaknesses of such statistics, (13) do suggest that, for at least some of the labouring population, the domestic learning of vocational and social skills was supplemented by more



formal teaching whether from parents or paid teachers. (14)

In equipping children for their adult roles parents were informed by the practical circumstances of their daily lives and by the social, economic and cultural status quo. Almost inevitably, therefore, parental perceptions of what was an appropriate up-bringing for their children encompassed gender-derived values and divisions of labour as well as class-cultural perceptions. Girls learned spinning and/or husbandry skills, and housework and child care from their mothers in preparation for their dual role as wives and mothers and supplementary earners, and also that their place in the 'natural' order of things was one of dependence on a father or husband. Boys were taught weaving and/or agricultural skills and were prepared for their role as chief breadwinner and 'head' of the family. Their 'natural' roles were different and so also was their up bringing. Gender derived assumptions also defined the acquisition of literacy skills as being less relevant to the needs of a girl, and it is doubtful whether the popular tradition of the educated and articulate worker was ever seen to apply to the female members of the workforce. We do not know for certain that parents were less inclined to teach daughters to read than sons, (15) but we do know that girls were much less

likely to attend an endowed school, (16) that the curriculum of girls' charity schools gave a greater priority to the teaching and learning of domestic skills than to literacy skills and that illiteracy was far more common amongst women of all social classes than amongst men. According to Laqueur, for example, 59% of male weavers marrying in Manchester between 1754 and 1764 could sign their names but only 11% of brides could do so, and in the East Riding female literacy across all social groups was 48% in the 1780s while male literacy was 67%. (17) Differences between the literacy levels of the two sexes were probably less acute in areas such as East Anglia where the scattered rural population rarely had access to schools and where popular cultural traditions gave little value to 'book learning', but greater equality between the two sexes as far as literacy levels were concerned almost inevitably implied an equality of ignorance. In sum, the meaning of education for the lower orders in the eighteenth century was gender specific and in the 'bringing up' and the schooling of their children, the educational traditions and practices of working people assumed and replicated gender divisions and patriarchal values as the norm.

The transfer of spinning and many of the preparatory processes of manufacture to mechanised

production did not initially cause too much disruption to the social structure and organisation of weaving families, nor to their educational traditions and practices. After the 1790s, as the profitability of hand-weaving began to decline, increasing poverty and pressures of work forced a gradual curtailment of both schooling and home learning, with little time or money available for either. (18) But it was the factory employment of wives and children forced by increasing poverty that dealt the most serious blow to family customs and educational traditions. Entering the factories at the age of nine or even younger, (19) children had little opportunity for school attendance with, at best, a short period of infant schooling supplemented by part-time attendance at a Sunday school. Of equal significance, however, was a reduction in the interaction between weavers' children and their parents. For while some may have worked with their mothers with some limited survival of family-based employment, (20) the absence of fathers from the factories, (21) the pace and hours of work, the narrow range of tasks performed, and the early independence of children all operated to erode the social organisation of the weaving family and its educative functions. (22) This disruption was not experienced to the same extent by the former

agricultural workers and others who formed the majority of employees in the early factories. Their cultural traditions and customary expectations were often very different from those of the domestic weavers' and their employment in the factories, often on a familial basis, involved either little change in family relationships or a greater degree of proximity and interaction between family members.(23) Here, indeed, the educative function of the family may even have been enhanced - at least with regard to male family members - by the spinner-piecer system of recruitment and training which enabled a number of spinners directly to employ their own sons or other kin. (24) Like the children of the weavers, however, few 'immigrant' children had the chance to attend school even if they so wished (25) and, whether or not they worked with their families, they had little opportunity to acquire literacy skills and 'book learning'. Even if parents had wished or could afford to send their children to school, existing school provision was grossly inadequate for the rapidly expanding and youthful population of the industrial areas. The changes in the organisation of labour consequent on the early mechanisation of cotton textile production, therefore worked against the education of children as it had traditionally taken place, both in the family and in the schools. The net



result was a sharp decline in literacy rates after the 1770s, with male literacy in Lancashire falling to a low of 32% in Bury and to 49% in Ecclestone (the highest in the county) and with female literacy dropping to between 8% (Deane) and 19.5% (Ecclestone) in 1820 (26) - a factor which would have had a cumulative impact on the declining significance of familial education.

These declining literacy levels seem to have caused little concern to manufacturers and, as Sanderson has remarked "almost all the new factory jobs created by the new technology were successfully operated by sub-literate labour ". (27) While the technical skills of female power loom weavers, for example, were much in demand and their apparent docility encouraged their employment, the fact that they were only around a third as literate as the male handloom weavers they were replacing was of relatively little importance. (28)

This is not to suggest that literacy was necessarily irrelevant to the Lancashire economy or to the workers themselves. The possession of literacy skills could be advantageous to those seeking work in a clerical, supervisory or skilled category within the textile industry or the tertiary sector as a whole and there is evidence of a demand for, and an interest in, the provision of a "more intensive

education" for some male workers particularly after the 1820s. (29) There is little to suggest, however, that in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century the demands of the economy were generating any awareness that an extension of elementary schooling to all working people for the purposes of securing a literate workforce would be at all beneficial. (30) But if industrialisation helped to create an increasingly illiterate workforce in this early period, it also helped to create one that was seen to be turbulent and threatening; and if there was little concern about the illiteracy of the lower orders, there was considerable and very widespread concern about their ill-disciplined, 'uncivilised' and disrespectful behaviour and the threats this presented to the efficiency of production and the peace of the social order.

Population growth and the new forces of industrialisation and urbanisation were seriously undermining the old social order with its bonds of reciprocal obligation between the labouring population and their social superiors. Riots and popular disturbance were not a new social phenomenon, but the generally relatively minor breaches of public order of the eighteenth century successfully had been held in check by the authority of the squire and parson supplemented by the parish constables and the

magistrates and, where necessary, by the military. It was fast becoming apparent, however, that though this largely amateur and parochial authority system may have been adequate for the world of the rural village and the small market town, it was totally inappropriate in the new social, demographic and geographical context of industrial society. The former deference of the lower orders was beginning to give way to a new spirit of class identification with unwelcome manifestations of independence from the old social bonds, and, with awareness of how easily antagonism and conflict could slip over into revolution, the middle and upper ranks of society were becoming increasingly alarmed. Radical and revolutionary ideas were abroad, the security of the old social order was crumbling and "private property and public liberty" threatened by the growth of "a lawless and furious rabble". (31)

A variety of palliatives and remedies were proposed and implemented; from increased philanthropy and poor relief, to censorship, repression and coercion (32) to the 'moral regeneration of all ranks of society - but most particularly of the lower ranks. And one way of achieving the moral regeneration of the poor, "to bring about that reformation in manners which is so much wanted at present" (33) was seen to be, as Hannah More wrote, "to train up the lower classes in

habits of industry and piety". (34)

The utilisation of schooling as a vehicle for rescue and reform was not a new development in the late eighteenth century. In seeking to provide an education that would teach the children of the poor to be useful and contented in their humble station, the charity schools of the early eighteenth century had denied the principle of social mobility for poor and able boys that was present - if to a limited degree - in the old system of the endowed grammar schools (35) in favour of regulation and reform. These purposes were expressed succinctly in an address to charity school pupils in Spitalfields in 1793. "If you are humble, thankful, orderly, diligent, honest and good", these children were told, "you will be fit to be servants and apprentices". (36) What was new, however, was the idea that all children should go to school to learn 'civilised' habits of obedience, though preferably without too much expense and avoiding any encouragement to children to aspire beyond their ordained social station. Sarah Trimmer, a prominent supporter of education for the lower orders, was quite specific about the purposes of the new Sunday schools and Schools of Industry which became so popular at the end of the century. These, she said,



afford instruction to unlimited numbers of children, who could not be admitted to charity schools, on account of the expense attending them; neither could such multitudes be trained up as charity children are, without great injury for society: for, however desirable it may be to rescue the lower kinds of people from that deplorable state of ignorance in which the greatest part of them were for a long time suffered to remain, it cannot be right to train them all in a way which will most probably raise their ideas above the very lowest occupations in life, and disqualify them for those servile offices which must be filled by some of the members of the community, and in which they may be equally happy with the highest if they will do their duty. (37)

What was new then, was the concept of formal schooling as a vehicle for mass social improvement; the means of "civilising a class as a whole through its children". (38) The purpose of education was "to form a good citizen", and the way to do this, according to the Rev. J. Brown, was to

Impress the infant with early habits; even to shackle the mind ... with salutary prejudices, such as may create a conformity of thought and action with the established principles on which his society is built. (39)

This was to be achieved by teaching the children of

the labouring poor the Christian 'rules of society'. These purposes were summed up by the Calcutt Street Sunday school in Manchester which stated, the "chief object of this institution is to teach poor children to read the Holy Scriptures ...to instruct them in the principles of the Christian religion" so that they might learn "obedience to their parents and subjection to their superiors." (40) Joseph Lancaster of the undenominational Royal Lancasterian Association (later the British and Foreign Society) urged the benefits to be gained from educating the lower orders, claiming that "the effect of building a school" would be,

that in a town exposed to all the evils of dissipation and vice, usual in commercial towns, where the rising generation are training up in ignorance, wickedness and forgetfulness of God, very large numbers will soon be training in his fear; in the knowledge of his ways; and in the daily remembrance of his commandments (41)

Of the two points of utility in the monitorial system employed by the Society, stated the first Report, literacy was "very inferior", taking very much a second place to the "frame of mind created by the discipline of education" . In defining the purpose of mass schooling as the amelioration of social evils through a training in religion, the British society

identified an improvement "in the habits, attitudes - the general 'moral' orientation of the child" as having a greater importance than the development of innate abilities or skills or knowledge (42) and in this the society found common ground with the Anglican National Society established in 1811. According to the Rev. Andrew Bell, "the leading object of elementary education" was,

To render simply, easy, pleasant, expeditious and economic, the acquisition of the rudiments of letters, and of morality and religion ...

And though the order of his wording might suggest some concern with the development of individual abilities, the statement that follows made clear his order of priorities. "In every instance under my observation", he said,

and in every report which my brethren have honoured me of the effect produced by the Madras system in their parishes, the improvement in the subordination, and orderly conduct, and general behaviour of the children, has been particularly noticed, and must be regarded as infinitely the most valuable part of its character.(43)

Also new, in line with the concept of formal schooling as a vehicle for mass social improvement,

was the principle that the education of girls was equally, if not more important than that of boys. As the wives and mothers of the future it was essential that girls should be educated in 'correct' moral and Christian values so that they might extend a civilising and restraining influence on their husbands and children. In the case of girls, therefore, the reform and social control purposes of elementary education were given an explicit emphasis, with both education Societies stressing the prime importance of educating girls because of "the influence of the female character on society". (44)

In the words of the Rutland branch of the National Society, provision should be made for the instruction of as many girls as was possible,

judging the right education of the female sex, even in the lower situations in life, to be of the utmost importance: it being obvious to every day's experience, that the training of younger children devolves upon the mother at an age very important for forming their principles and conduct: and in poor families where the wife has been best taught, the family is best conducted and the children brought up in the best manner. (45)

For the British Society, educated girls were "the leaven yearly put into the mass of human society" and,



however earnestly the education of boys is promoted, if we at the same time neglect the culture of the female mind, it is evident that the great object of our exertions will be very imperfectly attained, if it should not be entirely frustrated.(46)

Limited and restrictive as these purposes were, the notion of formal schooling as a cure for social ills was not universally accepted, and even Hannah More was forced to defend her schools against persistent claims that they were subverting the social order by lessening "the natural and necessary ignorance of the poor". (47) Opposition to any extension of education to the labouring population was particularly strong amongst the Tories, but the sort of hostility towards educating the poor that was expressed by Davies Giddy in his well known contribution to the debate on Whitbread's Parochial Schools Bill (48) was not representative of parliamentary opinion in general. Response seems to have been divided largely between indifference to the whole issue and support for the principle - a response that was probably indicative of national feeling, at least among the upper ranks of society. Whitbread's proposal for a national system of compulsory schooling financed by the poor rates foundered rather on issues of finance and control;

issues that were to block all attempts to establish a national, state system of education before 1870, leaving the provision - and the purposes - of schooling for the lower orders to be determined by voluntary bodies. But while the Tory government of 1807, true to its laissez-faire principles, rejected legislative involvement in favour of voluntarism, practical voluntary support was often to be outweighed by local hostility or indifference, or overcome by local preferences for alternative forms of schooling or by the sheer size of the task. And while the government felt that education was properly the business of the Anglican church, reliance on voluntary initiatives left the way clear for a wide diversity of practices and purposes as different groups in different regions put forward their own definitions of what schooling was necessary, for whom, and for what ends.

Thus while many defined the purposes of formal schooling as a social investment, this was variously interpreted; with education being seen as an explicitly coercive form of social control (a policeman without boots as it were) or, implicitly, as a means of socialising and 'civilising' the lower orders, but also as a vehicle for individual enlightenment and fulfilment and even the means of achieving a more equitable society. Others defined

the purposes of education in more instrumental terms, seeing the provision of schooling as a means of instilling the time-work disciplines required for the new industrial workforce or as a supply source for reliable and tractable workers with vocational skills or, as a means to an end - an avenue to social mobility and a better paid future.

Differences of social and occupational rank within the working-classes also mediated perceptions of what was educationally appropriate. Sarah Trimmer, for example, differentiated between the "first degree" of the lower orders who she felt should receive a "comprehensive" education in a charity school in preparation for their future as elementary school teachers, apprentices and as domestic servants for "respectable families". Those below them, who would be employed in "inferior offices in life" in the factories and as "common servants", required a vocationally oriented education combining "labour with learning". (49)

Nor were the 'lower orders' themselves a single homogenous group with a singular perception of the utility of schooling or of its purposes, but a whole variety of groups with different values, different circumstances, and different experiences of education and of schooling.

In sum, though the weight of public rhetoric may

have been inclined towards a perception of provided schooling as a means of creating a docile, co-operative, virtuous and loyal population of working people, ready and eager to serve the needs of the economic and social order, there was no accepted national consensus as to the merits or otherwise of schooling the lower orders. Nor was there, in the context of voluntary provision, any means, beyond exhortation and appeals to individual generosity, of ensuring a supply of school places sufficient to undertake the 'civilising' process. The gaps between the stated aims and policies of the major education Societies and the realities of practice and provision were thus often considerable.

Nowhere was the disjunction between between rhetoric and popular opinion and between policy and action more apparent than in the matter of girls' education. As important as the education of girls was said to be in the cause of social reform and control, the high moral purposes expressed by the two education societies were not always realised, and it is against the practices of both the central and local branches of the two Societies and the rather more pragmatic perception of the purposes of educating girls that these convey, that these expressed aims must be measured. For though the importance of educating girls was frequently extolled



by local branches, the theoretical primacy given to girls' education by such high sounding sentiments only rarely translated into actual practices. And even though the central committee of the National Society . added financial pressure to moral exhortations to increase the number of school places available to girls, (50) the Society's own central schools at Baldwin's Gardens actually admitted far fewer girls than boys. (table 1)

Table 1.

Average Number of Children on the books of Baldwin's Gardens (51)

	Boys	Girls
1812	610	250
1817	579	273
1822	493	232
1827	350	188
1832	310	170
<u>total admitted 1812-1832</u>		Girls 4,262
		Boys 7,089

The same was the case in local branches of the Society with, in 1829, the number of boys on the books of day and Sunday schools in two-thirds of the districts with schools in union considerably outnumbering girls with 100,477 boys compared to only 74,136 girls (42.5 per cent girls).(52) Accurate statistical evidence of enrolment at British schools is much less accessible, (53) but the Ladies Committee of 1826 was very definitely of the opinion that "slow progress" was being made "in the instruction of females", and that,

from all the information your committee have obtained, as to the average demand for teachers, or the average number of children in the schools, it is clear that the blessings of early instruction are provided for a far less number of girls, than of boys.(54)

Certainly, the 1833 returns of educational enrolment (those for 1818 did not differentiate between the sexes) strongly suggest a much lower proportion of female scholars on the books of day schools (public and private) across the whole country. It is impossible to be precise about such figures, even allowing for the irregularities known to exist in the 1833 returns, (55) they also contain large numbers of children whose sex was 'not specified. But assuming a proportional breakdown of this category, the relative

proportions of male and female scholars can be estimated as around 44% female scholars to 56% male. (56)

The Sunday schools appear to have had rather different patterns of enrolment with a slightly higher proportion of female to male scholars (50.4% girls, 49.6% boys). (57) The National Society did recommend in 1819 that, where funds were short, Sunday schools should be established for older boys but this was proposed as a cost cutting expedient, reflecting the priority that the Society stated should be given to the provision of day schooling for girls. (58) Though the motives of the providers of Sunday schooling would have varied considerably, (59) it seems likely that many Sunday schools sought actively to foster the education of girls, with their efforts being spurred by a recognition of the greater importance actually accorded in practice to the provision of schooling for boys. As the Stockport Church of England Sunday school declared in 1811,

another motive which will prompt a benevolent and reflecting man to countenance Sunday schools is, that in them equal provision is made for the instruction of Girls as of Boys. Other charity schools are more designed for the education of boys; but girls have an equal, if not superior claim, because their influence is

more extensive ... to correct those low and degrading practices which have prevailed in the manufacturing districts, and to raise the female character to its proper tone and influence in the lower walks of society, the instructions of the Sunday school are peculiarly well adapted. (60)

June Purvis has argued that fewer school places were provided for girls because, in practice, their schooling was considered to be less important than that of boys, (61) and there is evidence in addition to that of differentiated enrolment statistics to give some support to this claim. The contrast between lengthy and enthusiastic accounts of the progress of boys' schools and the brief, often cursory attention given to the schools for girls in the Annual Reports of the two Societies, particularly those of the British Society, certainly conveys a lesser interest in the education of girls, though management procedures were also contributory. (62) There was, in addition, a great deal of expressed hostility against the education of girls, particularly against the teaching of literacy skills to girls. The Ladies Committee of the British Society referred to this in their report for 1833, remarking that,

Prejudices which, so far as the boys are concerned, have long since passed away, still hang around the education of girls, and, it is to be feared, will not easily be



dissipated. (63)

Interesting as this observation is, it is the comments that follow it which are the most revealing, in their suggestions as to why girls' schooling was seen to be of a lesser importance. The ladies went on to say,

The friends of the poor are commonly very selfish, or very shortsighted, with regard to the instruction of girls. They are willing enough to train them up for servants; - they forget the great majority of them will be mothers ... and mothers form the character of their offspring. (64)

Impressionistic evidence, based on numerous comments from local Societies contained within the Annual Reports of the National and the British Societies, (65) certainly supports the suggestion that instrumentalism rather than ideology informed popular opinion as to the purposes of girls' education. While a rationale based on the imperatives of social reform might emphasise the importance of educating girls for the moral responsibilities of marriage and motherhood, the rather more instrumental concerns of local providers often saw the training of girls for the practical duties of domestic service as taking a much more immediate priority - a purpose which, particularly in this early period, attracted as much hostility as support for the idea of teaching girls

to read and write. It is likely, therefore, that local attitudes towards the Whitby British school for girls were representative of the experience of many similar establishments. As the school reported in 1815,

An institution of this kind not only recommends itself to the benevolence of the ladies of Whitby, but also to their interests. The difficulty of obtaining steady, industrious and faithful servants has long been a subject of just complaints. The school for girls can scarcely fail to have a powerful effect in removing this serious evil; for it will prove a valuable nursery for female servants trained up in habits of regularity and industry, integrity and goodness.

Some, it is true, have asserted or insinuated that it is dangerous to educate the lower orders of society, particularly females; that servants who can read and write will be less dutiful and submissive than those who are ignorant, and that learning makes them arrogant, discontented and intractable.(66)

Nevertheless, to conclude that prejudice erected barriers limiting girls' access to schooling in general is to come dangerously close to suggesting a 'national condition' prevailing across all regions and throughout the whole period - a situation that was as unlikely to prevail in relation to the

education of girls as it was to the nature of elementary education overall.(67) Such an argument also fails to recognise the significance of local conditions in mediating perceptions of the merits of education for both boys and girls, with the nature and quality of relationships between different social groups, economic conditions, labour demand and supply, and the size and distribution of local populations all interacting to affect the range and extent of schooling provision. Here the provision of schooling for girls was also subject to influences on the provision of schooling in general, with considerable variation across and within geographical regions.

#### **Schooling Provision: the Local Dimensions**

In Norfolk and Suffolk, though the provision of schooling was at a relatively healthy level in comparison with that of Lancashire in 1818, with 7 per cent and 7.1 per cent respectively of the counties' populations enrolled at a day school,(68) there were many factors militating against educational provision in general, though these were felt with varying emphases by the two sexes. In Lancashire, on the other hand, though a low incidence of day school enrolment in 1818 (4.7 per cent of the

population (69) points to the many barriers that inhibited school provision, a steady growth in provision was facilitated by the identification of the region as an area of educational priority, particularly by the National Society. In this instance, however, it was the boys rather than the girls who benefited from the expansion in provided day schooling. Indeed, though both regions experienced particular problems regarding the provision of schools, the causes - and the consequences - were frequently very different, particularly in relation to gender patterns of school enrolment. Thus though a further argument put forward by Purvis, that girls' access to schooling - indeed their whole educational experience - was hampered by a double burden, of class and of gender, (70) may be possible to sustain in the case of Lancashire, evidence from Suffolk and Norfolk may well suggest different conclusions. In either case it is important to explore local issues and developments in detail, before reaching possibly premature conclusions. It is important, therefore, to compare the experiences of the two sexes, and to examine the intersections between class and gender in influencing attitudes towards education and schooling, in the nature and level of schooling provision, and, most importantly, in patterns and levels of school enrolment within the



two regions.

Stephens has shown that the level of educational provision was substantially better in this period in predominantly agricultural counties overall, yet though the levels of day school enrolment in Norfolk and Suffolk were slightly above the national average, they were considerably lower than those for agricultural counties elsewhere, where the proportion of the population enrolled varied between 8.6 per cent and 13.2 per cent. Indeed, with enrolment levels around 7 per cent, neither county can be regarded as having a good provision of elementary schooling in this early period.(71) Leaving aside for the moment the question of consumer demand for schooling in the two counties, the supply of school places was clearly inadequate to meet the educational needs of the child population, with, for example, 216 of 633 parishes in Suffolk having no day school facilities in 1818, and with both counties having day school provision for only around 40 - 49 per cent of the child population. (72)

In Lancashire, a low level of day school enrolment in the early part of the century can be linked to a high level of population growth which swamped existing provision; (73) a problem that was exacerbated by a decline in the establishment of new day schools between 1796 and 1816. (74) The result

was that, even if their circumstances permitted attendance at a day school, the supply of schools in the manufacturing districts was insufficient for the numbers of children within the population. In the eight manufacturing districts examined by Sanderson, for example, less than 2 per cent of the local child population could be accommodated in the endowed schools, and in five of these parishes the places available in all other forms of schooling available to the children of working people were sufficient only for less than 5 per cent of children. (75)

Without the stimulus of new industries to attract inward migration, population growth in Norfolk was on a par with the average and was slower than average in Suffolk. (76) Rather than demographic pressures, it was problems of rural isolation, indifference and hostility amongst the higher social groups towards the very idea of educating the lower orders, and a resultant lack of resources that presented barriers to the provision of education for both boys and girls.

In a collection of letters written in response to a general enquiry from the Archdeacon in 1814, the Anglican clergy of Norfolk outlined the numerous obstacles they encountered in their efforts to establish day schools for the children of the

labouring population in their rural parishes. These included: in Idbriss,

the want of accommodation in a school room and I can find no place that would convert to that purpose, even if our pecuniary resources were far more ample than I have reason to believe they would prove - a second great difficulty presents itself in the want of a person resident in any of these townships capable of being sufficiently instructed to take the place of a master; if we should fetch any one from a distance I do not know where we should find a residence for him;

In Ketteringham and Hethel,

My parishes ... are small, and the population not numerous - the poorer classes of people chiefly consisting of Peasantry; of course their occupations are of such a nature as to leave them little time for literary instruction, without materially affecting their pecuniary interests, and the means of obtaining their daily portion of sustenance;

At Beeston, the rector had established a Sunday school and he and three other local people funded a small infant school where 26 children were taught to read (8 boys and 18 girls) but, as he explained,

As the fund is limited, it has been found necessary to limit the number of pupils ... The want of a more enlarged system arises

... from a two-fold cause, viz, the objections of the farmers to losing the labour of a boy who is capable of work, and the inability of the parents to forego the price of that labour ... An establishment under Dr. Bell's system in my opinion would hardly answer as the adjoining parishes in this district are far too asunder to enable children of tender age at the distance of two or three miles to attend regularly at a central school.

In Winfarthing, "a large proportion" of the labouring classes and many small tenant farmers were Methodists and "the religious bias of many of the parishioners" and "the want of pecuniary resources" prevented the establishment of a National school despite the professed "earnest endeavours" of the rector. In Barton St. Mary, the rector complained of "a want of zeal and energy in the cause of education " on the part of the tenant farmers who composed the majority of his parishioners, and in another parish the rector found

a considerable and almost general great pressure of disapprobation to the plan of educating the poorer classes of society - but this dislike is manifested chiefly by persons engaged in agricultural concerns ... from an apprehension of its interfering with a sufficient supply of children for the performance of such operations as are necessary for the proper management of



farms. (77)

Here we have an extensive range of inter-connecting factors which, in varying degrees, affected efforts to establish schools across the country; from a lack of resources with which to establish and maintain a school, to the degree of local support for elementary schooling (often dependent on local demand for child labour), to social, religious, demographic and geographical factors. (78) That prejudice was a key factor in hampering schooling provision was plain, but it was a general prejudice against the whole notion of educating the lower orders, or a prejudice that was directed against the education of boys as much, if not more, as against the education of girls.

Many farmers were illiterate themselves (79) and were notoriously hostile to elementary education, seeing boys in particular as cheap labour of far more use in the fields than wasting their time on unnecessary learning. Further, even if it did not encourage labourers to leave the land ( and thereby reduce the labour surplus that was so advantageous to the farmer class), schooling would unfit them for field work. Even as late as the 1840s, the Inspector, the Rev. Bellairs could comment on the "erroneous impression" still commonplace in the region, that

the cultivation of the intellect unfits for manual labour, and the fear that education

may destroy the present relations between master and servant, and substitute no better. That instead of a plodding, hard-working peasantry, who do their work much as the animals they tend, we shall have an effeminate class of persons, averse to rough work, conceited and insubordinate.

Or again, that the peasantry, when educated, will become ambitious, cease to be content with their condition and aim at the rank of tenant farmer. (80)

Generally, though problems of lack of support were not confined to rural areas, (81) support was more forthcoming in relatively prosperous urban areas such as Bury St. Edmunds, Ipswich, Norwich, and Stowmarket and in these towns the progress of elementary education was reasonably steady. In the rural areas school provision was largely dependent on the Anglican clergy, but non-residence was common and local clergy were not always willing, or able, to shoulder this burden, though numbers did. At Whixoe in Suffolk, for example, the rector clearly shared the views of the farmers, being firmly of the opinion that "those who are habituated early in life to regular labour generally turn out more useful and moral members of our society than those who are put to school too long", (82) though there was little danger of an over-long education in his parish which had no school at all in 1818 or 1833.

A further contributory factor to the relatively poor levels of educational provision in the region was the lack of support given to local initiatives by the National and British Societies. Stereotypical perceptions of the stolid, docile and deferential agricultural workforce, (83) a relative lack of disturbance or of political agitation in the two counties, and an apparent firmness of the traditional bonds linking master and man in harmonious reciprocity contrasted sharply with the problems associated with urbanisation and industrialisation, to give a infinitely lesser urgency to the education of the rural lower orders. Nor was there, with the firm continuance of gender-based demarcations in agricultural work, any suggestion of 'unnatural' behaviour on the part of rural women to arouse anxieties and stimulate efforts to 'civilise' girls through the provision of schooling. Thus, though local interests highlighted concerns about the decline of the "national character", the preservation of "this highly favoured kingdom ... amidst the wreck of nations and the judgements which are abroad on the earth" in appeals for support, (84) neither the Norfolk or Suffolk branches of the National Society received much in the way of financial assistance from the parent Society in London.

That financial assistance in support of school

provision in the region was often limited and erratic is illustrated by the accounts of the Norfolk and Norwich National Society. In 1824-1825, for example, a relatively prosperous year for the Society, total income from subscriptions, donations and investments amounted to only 863 pounds, and requests for assistance from local schools frequently had to be refused due to limited resources. Indeed, the Committee expressed fears that schools might have to be closed because of a lack of funds.(85) Many parishes were small and the clergyman's income tiny and the establishment of a school was a heavy financial burden which many, understandably, were reluctant or unable to bear.(86) Problems of resourcing were also compounded by rural poverty, with few parents able to pay school fees even if they could afford to forego a child's earnings or their assistance at home. Indeed, over half the school population of Norfolk and Suffolk attended school without payment in 1820, (87) thus depriving the schools of an important source of additional income.

The relatively slow growth of population allowed some progress to be made and by 1833, Norfolk and Suffolk still had higher than average proportions of their populations on the books of day schools (9% and 9.7% respectively).(88) The situation was less satisfactory, however, in terms of the expansion of



provision (89), and there remained many "dark spots and benighted villages"(90), particularly in the agricultural districts, where no day school of any character, public or private, existed, nor even a Sunday school.(91)

In Lancashire, though the increase in the proportion of the population at day school was on a par with that of Suffolk at 2.6%, this relatively small increase belies the progress achieved in the face of the challenges presented by educational destitution, rapid expansion of population and much local indifference and hostility. Much of this was attributable to the strenuous efforts of the National Society which, from the beginning, identified the industrial districts as being in particular need of the civilising influence of provided schooling and gave what Sanderson has described as "a quite exceptional and special place" (92) to the establishment of schools in urban districts of Lancashire. From a first grant of 100 pounds in 1817, grants from the National Society in London to places in Lancashire grew rapidly to reach a total of 8,735 pounds by 1833; an amount which far exceeded that raised within the county, and which represented the largest amount of the Society's resources sent to any county. (93) The benefits of this assistance were enhanced greatly by the enthusiastic efforts of the

Anglican clergy, and there was a rapid expansion in the number of National schools established, from just two schools in union in 1814 to 139 in 1833. (94)

Support for the work of the National and diocesan Societies was not, however, uniform throughout the county, with a deficiency of Anglican church provision in many densely populated areas and with a resistance to any extension of Church influence from many of the Nonconformist leaders of local communities. (95) An absence of middle-class inhabitants in the smaller manufacturing towns and the industrial villages also limited support, and the National Society was not able to achieve a level of schooling provision in the industrial districts commensurate with the aim to extend the benefits of an Anglican Christian education to the most 'uncivilised' elements of the county child population. (96) Though claiming to be educating some 16,500 boys and 12,987 girls in the county by the end of the 1830s, only 13 per cent or less of the children attending day school in 1833 were enrolled at Anglican schools, and in 1837 only 1.2 per cent of the population of Lancashire were on the books of Church day schools. (97)

The British Society was much less influential in Lancashire. Unlike the National Society, the British Society gave no financial assistance to the county

and, lacking the organisational infrastructure that gave the National Society its local cutting edge, was able to do little directly to support local efforts. Local support came predominantly from Nonconformist manufacturers and business men in the larger commercial and industrial centres, (98) and the Society achieved only a very limited success in agricultural districts or the urban areas outside the large commercial conurbations. (99) Only around 12 British schools were established in the county between 1809 and 1833, (all of which were in urban areas, including four in Liverpool(100)), and though some of these may have been very large, by the late 1830s there were less than half the number of pupils on the books of British schools than National schools. (101)

Other dissenting schools not in association with the British Society were also established in the county, but though the total of 65 schools controlled by Dissenters calculated by Stephens for 1833 compares favourably with the number of National schools, neither they nor the Anglicans can be said to have provided anything like the number of schools necessary for the mass schooling of the rapidly expanding population of Lancashire.(102) By 1833 therefore, despite all the efforts of the National Society, the proportion of the county population at

day school was, at 7.3 per cent, still well below the national average of 8.9 per cent. (103) Progress was being made, and, with a 2.6 per cent growth rate in the proportion of the county population on the books of a day school by 1833, progress in Lancashire compared favourably with that of counties like Suffolk and Norfolk, and with that in the industrial region of West Yorkshire. (104) But the sheer scale of the task meant that, as in Suffolk and Norfolk, there still remained many areas where the supply of school places was severely inadequate measured against the local child population.

Several summary points can be made here. Firstly, that there were enormous variations in schooling provision within regions, with the smaller market towns and commercial and administrative centres having superior levels of provision relative to population than either the industrial or predominantly rural areas. (105) Though neither Norfolk or Suffolk faced the challenge of school provision in large industrial or commercial centres with high population densities such as were found in Lancashire, all three regions contained isolated rural areas where particular difficulties led to a scarcity of educational provision. As the Select Committee Report of 1818 recognised, "a very great deficiency exists in the means of educating the Poor,



wherever the population is thin and scattered over country districts", (106) and that deficiency still remained in 1833. Though the perceived needs of the industrial districts were prominent in the attention of educationists, educational destitution was equally rife in the agricultural districts.

The second point is that, despite all the rhetoric, despite the efforts of the education Societies and middle-class reformers and philanthropists, educational expansion in this early period owed rather more to private and commercial initiative than to reformist zeal. For hidden within these statistics of educational provision is an enormous number of private schools. Around two-thirds of the children enrolled at day school in all three counties were on the books of a private rather than a provided day school, (107) making the private school and not the National or British day school the representative form of day schooling for the children of the working population in this period. This last point raises important questions about the nature of working class demand for schooling, for in the context of voluntary attendance, the supply of school places was only one side of the equation. The providers of public education may have wished to reform the daughters and sons of the lower social orders through an extension of the civilising

influence of a Christian and moral education but without the co-operation of working people themselves such ambitions were unlikely to achieve success.

### Demand for Schooling

Viewed from the perspective of consumer demand, attitudes towards the relative merits of formal education for the two sexes do seem to have been significant in determining access to schooling. In the immediate context, such attitudes cannot be divorced from the economic circumstances of working-class life across the two geographical regions, with school enrolment often dependent on a cost-benefit analysis of the advantages of schooling measured against the gains of paid employment or a child's assistance at home.

That the extensive employment of children was a major obstacle to expansion of educational provision is well known. This is a point that has been made many times, with the connections between employer hostility to schooling, limited financial support, poor provision and slow expansion, and poor long-term and daily attendance being well established. But there were further connections between the location and extent of school provision, the local labour market and 'consumer' response which are rarely, if

ever, addressed, and which had important but differing implications for boys' and girls' access to schooling. A further important determinant of educational provision, both public and private, was the extent to which children were likely to attend the schools provided, not least because a school was unlikely to survive unless it attracted a sufficient number of pupils to warrant its continuance. In Lancashire, for example, the decision was made by the National Society to direct provision at areas of perceived need rather than of demand and, not surprisingly, school failure was sometimes the result.(108) And it was as much a pragmatic recognition of where the best returns on limited resources could be obtained, as prejudice against or indifference towards the education of girls that led to the provision of fewer school places for them, with limited demand being met by limited supply. Thus in Liverpool, for example, the Corporation schools were originally intended for an equal number of boys and girls but places in the girls' school were reduced by 100 following a surveyor's report in 1824 stating that schools for girls "are never so numerously attended as the boys' schools". (109) Doubly handicapped by their domestic usefulness, particularly in areas of high employment for adult females, the cost-benefit equation generally tipped

against girls' attendance at day school, and where there was limited demand, limited provision was often a result.

The relationship between supply and demand was not always so straightforward. In the more agricultural areas of Norfolk and Suffolk, where there was little regular work available for girls or for their mothers, but where boys were required for work on the land, girls had the advantage in terms of their availability for schooling. The importance of domestic service as an occupation for country girls also gave a positive incentive to schooling, not least because attendance at a public school could be a useful point of contact with prospective employers. (110) Unfortunately for the girls, it was in the rural districts where the hostility of the farmers and the obstacles presented by meagre resources and scattered populations often precluded the establishment of a public school and where rural poverty made private initiatives less likely. Ironically enough, in the very districts where circumstances were more favourable to girls' day school attendance, conditions worked against the establishment of schools for them to attend - a fact which explains why rural attendance figures did not modify the overall picture of a gender imbalance in day school attendance to a greater extent.



In the smaller market towns and the commercial and administrative centres, however, the generally superior levels of provision can be seen to have been as much a factor of working-class attitudes towards schooling as of other contributory factors; with conditions conducive both to supply and demand. The social structure of such communities meant that financial assistance was more likely to be forthcoming, the size of the population neither swamped nor discouraged provision, and, not only was there less demand for child labour than in the factory or farming districts there were also occupational opportunities and the prospect of "eligible situations" (111) that encouraged a positive evaluation of the benefits of schooling. At least this was so for boys. For girls the pull of paid employment, either for themselves or their mothers, was most sharply felt in the towns and the limited employment prospects available to women offered little inducement to forego a girl's earnings (or those of her mother) or her assistance at home with domestic chores. And as girls were less likely to attend school, so fewer school places were provided for them.

Parental attitudes regarding the purposes and value of education for their sons and daughters could also be coloured by social and political beliefs which

defined the purposes of schooling very differently from the narrow control rationale put forward by their social 'superiors'. There were, as we have seen, strong educational traditions among the hand-weaving communities of the North which saw education as essentially a family and community concern, serving to develop the practical and vocational skills, (and sometimes literacy skills) and the knowledge that would be useful in later life. As these traditions became curtailed by the development of industrial capitalism, so alternative versions of the purposes and practices of education grew up to replace them; from the schools provided for the children of the labouring population which sought to produce acquiescent workers through the medium of a religious and/or vocational education to a whole network of independent, working-class educational initiatives which sought to retain, expand and develop their own autonomous values and practices. (112) And in the same way that such unwelcome manifestations of working-class independence gave a dynamic to the extension of provided schooling - and to its repressive purposes - so also the narrow repressive purposes of the provided schools stimulated the extension of an alternative 'system' of working-class educational initiatives and

practices in the industrial districts of the north. As Hodgskin and Robertson wrote in 1823,

Men had better be without education, than be educated by their rulers; for then education is but the mere breaking in of the steer to the yoke; the mere discipline of a hunting dog. (113)

Working-class radicals were sharply critical of the forms of schooling seen to be appropriate for their children, of its methods, (114) and of its purposes. They deeply resented attempts to inculcate the cultural values and economic orthodoxies of industrial capitalism into working people through institutions like the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and through the middle-class controlled Mechanics Institutes which developed in the 1820s. (115) And in rejection of, and in opposition to the coercive, limited, "trivial and childish" (116) education provided for them, the radicals formulated their own counter-cultural educational theories and practices. (117)

As would be expected, the radical education tradition which developed expressed very different purposes to those of the provided schools. The children of working people would not "be taught their duties every day and all day long" (118) but, with

their parents, would learn really useful knowledge and the ability to:

form right judgements, to see things as they really are, the real qualities and relations of physical objects, real facts and the real consequences of actions, it is their interest to be taught nothing but the truth; (119)

The purpose of education was universal enlightenment: because knowledge was good in itself, because it enabled individuals to develop their talents and foster the communal good, and, above all, because the possession of knowledge and understanding would enable working people to bring about a reformed and just society. And if enlightenment was to be universal, education should be extended to all - boys and girls, men and women - and in ways that were accessible to all. And in reading and discussion groups, lectures, the circulation and reading of the unstamped press, in coffee houses and pubs, in homes, in the Halls of Science and the Institutes, in the Sunday schools and other more formal educational establishments the radicals developed a varied, flexible, often improvised, often haphazard, but vigorous educational 'network' (120) to extend education to all.

Despite the intended universality of the



enlightenment to be gained, however, it seems that a number of barriers operated to limit women's participation in these educational activities. Women were, as we have seen, active members of radical political associations, they played a full part in the circulation of unstamped periodicals, they attended the community Sunday schools as pupils and as teachers and were members of the Owenite Institutes, but it is likely that gender divisions of labour and behavioural conventions limited their involvement in the more informal aspects of these activities. It was acceptable for women to go into pubs in this period, (121) and one assumes that they were not debarred from the coffee houses, but all reference to the reading and discussion groups that met in such establishments suggest that these were predominantly, if not exclusively, male gatherings. Women were more likely to be illiterate than men, and were also less likely, because of the conditions of their lives and work, to enjoy the experience of discussion and debate with friends and workmates that was so important in developing education beyond mere literacy towards a real desire for knowledge and understanding. (122) And if the obstacles faced by working people eager for education, "the lack of leisure, the cost of candles (or of spectacles) as well as educational deprivation", presented "almost

overwhelming difficulties" (123) for men, how much more sharply they must have impinged on women who generally had less money, less leisure, and less education. (124) In sum, these more informal activities were located in male domains, based on male cultural activities, defined by male educational needs, and were, whether by cause or effect, predominantly male activities

Some radicals stressed the equal rights of women to be educated. Thompson, for example, urged:

Let your libraries, your models, and your lectures ... be equally open to both sexes. Have not women an equal right to that happiness which arises from an equal cultivation of all their faculties that men have? ... Long have the rich excluded the poorer classes from knowledge: will the poorer classes now exercise the same odious power to gratify the same odious propensity - the love of domination over the physically weaker half of their race? (125)

But only the Owenites seem actively to have encouraged girls and women to participate in educational activities on an equal basis. An article in the Owenite journal The Pioneer on the subject of 'Female Education' urged the importance of women becoming educated. It stated,

While the working-classes are looking in a thousand ways for the means by which to

extricate themselves from poverty ... one of the most fruitful sources ... is seldom thought of ... THE EDUCATION OF OUR FEMALE POPULATION (126) (original emphasis)

And the constitution of Charlotte Street Owenite school, for example, displayed a specific commitment to equal opportunities that was rare indeed in stating that every child would be encouraged "to express his or her opinion", and that both sexes were to have "equal opportunities for acquiring useful knowledge".(127)

That there was a strong demand among women for access to education is unquestionable. According to Robert Raikes, for example, "mothers of the children and grown up women ... begged to be admitted" to Sunday schools, (128) and as letters to The Pioneer illustrate, there were numbers of women eager to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. A 'bondswoman of Birmingham' wrote,

it is time the working females of England began to demand their long suppressed rights. Let us, in the first place, endeavour to throw off the trammels that have so long enshackled our minds and get knowledge ... maybe the time is not distant when the superiority of educated females will be acknowledged over those who are kept in blind and stupid ignorance.

Another letter told of the efforts of the 'ladies of Leicester',

the scandalous bye word of 'blue stocking' which has been thrown at every intelligent woman who happens to have more sense than her stupid husband has not deterred the ladies of Leicester from uniting to obtain the advancement of themselves and their kindred. (129)

Unlike the Mechanics' Institutes of the period the Owenite Halls included women amongst their members, and in the 1830s and 1840s these Halls and other Owenite schools and classes were an important venue for working-class female education. (130) But the relative merits of developments such as these must not be allowed to exaggerate their overall significance which, for reasons of geography and scale, was limited. For although support for Owenism was national, there were comparatively few Halls or schools established outside the main centres of London and the large industrial cities of the North and Midlands. (131) In East Anglia, therefore, Owenite educational facilities seem to have been confined to the larger centres of population such as Ipswich and Yarmouth, and though the spread of informal radical networks is impossible to quantify, the obstacles presented by rural poverty, isolation and ignorance, make it unlikely that these would have



flourished outside towns like Norwich, where there was a large community of hand-weavers (132).

But possibly the greatest barriers to female access to 'radical' educational activities were presented by male prejudice and by axiomatic assumptions and traditions. For even amongst the Owenites, despite all the expressed commitment to principles of gender equality, attitudes towards the education of women were often ambivalent and double edged - and in the continuing debate on the education of women conducted in the pages of the Socialist press can be seen a whole spectrum of attitudes, from the patriarchal and oppressive to the liberal but unconsciously patriarchal to the genuinely egalitarian. George Fleming, for example, argued,

The Socialists want women to be educated equal to themselves ... as the wives and daughters of free men, enjoying equal benefits with them. They wished her no longer to be the inhabitant of the cellar and the kitchen. (133)

But there were many who opposed such revolutionary ideas, with the fear that education might encourage women to neglect their domestic duties. "Men tremble at the idea of a reading wife" exclaimed Frances Morrison, and though working men were said to feel that "to read a newspaper is a want as urgent almost

as the desire for food", few of them, it seemed, "take any trouble to create in their wives this taste for reading".(134). There were also those who argued that women's mental capacities were 'naturally' different from those of men; that their emotionalism denied the rational objectivity that characterised "the cold calculations of the masculine intellect" while others defended the innate mental equality of women.(135). And so the arguments continued, with the issue of women's education being brought into sharp focus by the struggle to wrest control of the Mechanics' Institutes from the middle classes, where the question of women's admittance to classes could be used by working men as "a handy stick with which to beat their middle-class competitors". (136)

Yet the arguments put forward in support of women's admission to such classes bore a striking similarity to those expressed by the middle-classes; the purpose of female education was not the enlightenment of the female sex, but the elimination of domestic thriftlessness and the improvement in the standards of comfort and cleanliness of the working-class home. Rowland Detrosier, the President of the breakaway 'New Mechanics' Institution' established in Manchester in 1829, summed up the rationale which lay behind the formation of classes for women in the new institute,

Be assured the condition of the industrious artisan can never be permanently improved, until the daughter of the poor man be educated to perform with propriety and decorum the important duties of a wife and mother ... Is it of no moment to the working man that he should have a partner who has the ability to administer to his comfort and wants ...? Is it of no moment that the few comforts which are still left to him should be served up with cleanliness? Or would it ... detract from the charms of the home, if, when returning from the labours of the day, he found his little cot the blessed scene of cleanliness, good sense and cheerfulness? ... With whom are passed the first years of those who are to become the future parents of the future race? ... From woman, in the sacred character of mother! But if that woman be ignorant, brutish and uncleanly in her habits, what rational hope have you that her children will make either good mothers, good wives, good husbands or good fathers? (137)

As one woman complained bitterly,

Even the zealous friends of female education are afraid to press its claims on other than utilitarian and comparatively low grounds ... women are to be educated in order to qualify them for the duties of wives and servants ... How rarely is it argued that women should be educated in order that whatever capacities they possess

may be permitted to grow to their full height ...! (138)

'Spearhead knowledge' may have centred "on the experiences of poverty, political oppression and social and cultural apartheid", it may not have been "narrowly pragmatic" but rather "the knowledge calculated to make you free" (139) if, that is, you were male. For women really useful knowledge took a different meaning, and it was one that was 'narrowly pragmatic' and utilitarian. For how could children be brought up properly, how could husbands be kept content, how could society be reformed and regenerated if women lacked domestic skills? Both the inherited educational traditions and the indigenous educational resources which provided the basis for the informal educational networks developed by the radicals (140) laid stress on the educative role of the family, both placed an emphasis on "bringing up the coming generation as harbingers of the new society" (141) and both, therefore, emphasised the importance of women's responsibilities towards their families with an implicit denial of individualistic educational purposes for women.

Purvis has commented that "it is often difficult to differentiate between the views of men from the different social strata when they spoke about women's education within the institutes", (142) and, indeed,



exactly the same might be said about views on the education of working-class women and girls overall. For whether in the context of the provided school, the Sunday school, the Mechanics' institutes or the Owenite Halls, or the informal educational activities of the radicals, whether inspired by visions of an alternative social and political order or the protection of the old, gender ideologies and divisions of labour combined to give paramount importance to the female role as the prime agent of cultural reproduction. Females were to be educated so that their children would be brought up in a 'true' understanding of the social, economic and political order - however that truth was defined. The ideology of the breadwinner wage was yet to penetrate working-class attitudes, but the Evangelical perception of the 'moral mission' of womanhood was paralleled by the radical vision of the processes of social regeneration. (143)

More immediately, the cause of social reform should be served by an improvement in the material conditions of life, and how else to do this but to teach girls the practical skills that would enable them to earn a living and run a comfortable and economical home when married? Women themselves may have had an alternative view of the purposes of education but the claims of women were subsumed,

marginalised or denied in the assertion of working-class ideals defined in male terms.

### The Private Schools

It is likely that for many (most?) (144) working people a preoccupation with the immediate practicalities of daily life emphasised the more utilitarian purposes of educating girls, with the development of their domestic and/or vocational skills taking a higher priority than more intellectual forms of 'useful knowledge'. And, like those of a more radical persuasion, the generality of working people were also often disinclined to send their children to a provided school - particularly their daughters - though their reasons were more often pragmatic than ideological. As we have seen the relative merits of schooling were generally assessed on a cost-benefit analysis of the benefits to be gained, with the conditions of the local labour market often being the deciding factor that tipped the balance for or against sending a child to school. If they felt their daughters needed any schooling at all, and often their participation in domestic activities in the home was felt to be sufficient to their 'educational' requirements, it was the private school rather than the public provided school that

was generally preferred.

As commercial enterprises, financed wholly by parental payments, the private schools necessarily were in the business of providing what parents and their children (145) wanted in terms of both the content and the organisation of schooling. (146) Run by working people, often by friends and neighbours, such schools were part of the working-class community rather than the alien imposition that the provided schools could appear to be. They offered a form of schooling that was compatible with the needs and rhythms of working-class life as their users understood them, rather than one based on the views of their social 'superiors' of what they ought to be. (147) They took children at an early age to free mothers for work, (148) they did not impose prohibitive or insulting rules about dress and cleanliness, (149) nor did they punish children in ways offensive to parents. Above all, the private schools were flexible. Attendance could be casual and intermittent, and if paid employment was available or the child's services needed at home, the children could be kept away without fuss. Inspector Fitch commented on this aspect of private school organisation later in the century, and though his somewhat pejorative tone denies the very real needs that often led to erratic attendance, he did

recognise that their informal organisation was an important aspect of the private schools' popularity. As he said,

Above all, the liberty of sending or detaining the children when they like is much appreciated by many parents. To a poor and ignorant woman living in an irregular hand-to-mouth way and accustomed to employ her children to run errands, ..., the persistent enquiries after absentees (of a good public school) are very irritating; she escapes all this by sending the children now and then whenever she can easily spare the money, to a so-called private school where no questions will be asked. (150)

Though often more expensive than the provided schools, the private schools were more accommodating to the economic fluctuations of working-class budgets and would wait for payment or come to some alternative arrangement. The schools were, therefore, compatible with the cultural values, the economic conditions and the every-day circumstances of working-class life. They represented, in Gardner's words, "a genuinely alternative working-class approach to childhood learning to that prescribed by the education experts", and provided "an education that was truly 'of' the working-class and not 'for' it". (151) As such, though the majority did not link



education with political purposes, (152) the private schools did represent a challenge to publicly regulated schooling and serious competition for the control of the hearts and minds of the child population that was central to the reform purposes of provided education. Thus in the same way that radical counter-cultural educational initiatives gave an imperative to the extension of provided schooling, so also the popularity of the private schools - and the refusal of working people to recognise the professed superiority of the public schools - provided an incentive for changes and adjustments to provided education. For the providers of public education increasingly recognised that if they wanted 'customers' in their schools, they had to provide the goods and services that those customers sought by providing at least some elements of what the working-classes themselves wanted from education.

### Changing Purposes?

A tendency to regard elementary education as an exercise in the social control of the lower orders has sometimes obscured the fact that the purposes of provided schooling were neither singular nor static, even during this early period. The diffusion of policies 'from the top' is always vulnerable to

different interpretations and ideas and, as has been seen, local support for schools was often based on very different premises from those expounded by the education 'establishment'.

The voluntary nature of school attendance also meant that consumer demand was able to exert a powerful influence to subvert narrow purposes of control and reform, particularly where schools were in competition for pupils. This was frequently the case with Anglican Sunday schools in urban areas, for example, and as one Anglican clergyman complained, "the larger supplies of intellectual food" provided by the Nonconformist Sunday schools forced Church schools "to make some advances in order to prevent complete desertion". (153) There were also a number of Sunday schools, particularly those associated with the Dissenting churches, where limited and restrictive purposes were being supplanted by an increasing emphasis on doctrines of self-help and individual advancement through education. As early as 1794 the Baptist Daniel Turner had put forward the argument that the Sunday schools should encourage the advancement of the poor, and the Wesleyan Minister, the Rev. T. Wood claimed in 1815 that one of the chief points of recommendation of the Sunday schools was the stimulus they gave to children's "desires after further attainment". (154) Some Sunday schools

went further, to act as informal employment agencies in assisting the advancement of their pupils. As W.F.Lloyd, one of the secretaries of the Sunday School Union, told the Committee investigating the education of London children in 1816, "steady and attentive" boys from the schools were recommended to situations where they would be likely "to be well attended and prosper" and, with "the advantages of a good education", many of these boys had risen in their employment. (155)

Examples such as these have led Laqueur to argue that "the repressive middle-class dominated Sunday school of Hannah More or William Fox was a rarity by the early nineteenth century", and that Sunday schools organised by the working classes themselves were implementing a "new and more progressive conception of Sunday school education" by the 1820s. (156) Whatever the merits of this argument, (157) it is clear that by around the 1820s numbers of Sunday schools were transmitting individualistic values which contrasted sharply with aims of instilling obedience to parents and subordination to 'superiors' via the teaching of Christian principles. (158)

Similarly, individualistic values extolling the virtues of self-help and advancement were being transmitted in numbers of the day schools associated

with the British Society, in complete contrast to the rationale put forward by Lancaster. Though regulative and coercive elements remained within the monitorial organisation of the schools, some were now operating in such a way as "to create labour aristocracies" with the implicit support of the British Society 'establishment'. (159) As Stephens has said, citing the example of the British school in Leeds, "a desire to use education to perpetuate subordination must not ... be overstated ... the Lancasterian school increasingly moved to a policy of encouraging the young to raise themselves in the world". (160) And from as early as the 1820s, there is evidence that this school, and a number of others also, were beginning to 'sell' their services by emphasising the improved prospects available to their pupils. (161)

But if the narrow purposes of boys' education were being increasingly re-appraised towards a wider, more individualistic interpretation of the meaning of education, there were no such developments with regard to girls. For them the purposes of schooling, whether in a Sunday school, a National school or a British school, remained singular and static. No matter how 'progressive' the conception of Sunday schooling or instrumental the aims of a day school, whether educational purposes were defined in



religious, secular or political terms, were repressive and coercive or encouraging of self-help and improvement, whether defined by Anglican or Dissenting clergy or working-class male radicals, the purpose of educating girls remained relative to their role within the working-class family. The fundamental purpose of educating girls was, and remained, to make them good wives and mothers in the interests of social reform. And if a girl's future role was familial, should not also her education be familial?

A perception of the purpose of schooling girls as being the production of domestic servants could be an incentive to school provision and attendance. But, beyond instrumentalism and high-sounding moral sentiments, beyond the exceptional views of a few male Radicals, there was little other to generate much interest in or enthusiasm for the schooling of girls - at least amongst the male members of the population. For though girls and adult women may have been eager for schooling, limited provision and the circumstances of daily life all too often denied their educational aspirations, with the limited educational fare provided by the Sunday schools representing the sum of their formal schooling for many.

### Summary: Girls' Access to Schooling

The first point to be made is that, typically, girls from the lower socio-economic ranks did not attend a day school in 1818. This was as true for girls in Norfolk and Suffolk as it was for girls in Lancashire, and it was also true for boys across both regions. With less than a third of the child population of Lancashire on the books of a day school in 1818 according to Marsden's calculations, however, the chances of a Lancashire child going to school were considerably less than those of the child in Norfolk or Suffolk where around 40-49% were enrolled at day school.(162) The typical child of the period, particularly in Lancashire, might therefore be described as a working child, though the distinction is a somewhat artificial one suggesting a mutual exclusivity between 'work' and 'school' that is inappropriate. Nonetheless, the fact that once past babyhood, children probably spent the greater part of their time helping parents at the loom or in the family plot, working in the factories and the fields, assisting with housework and child care, or engaged in a whole variety of money-getting tasks meant that they were more likely to attend a part-time school (163) such as a Sunday school if they attended school

at all.

This is not to suggest that attendance at school was the sole determinant of 'education'. As has been argued, indigenous educational traditions of familial education and the 'alternative' educational networks developed by the Radicals provided opportunities that would have enabled numbers of children and adults to acquire literacy skills, even, in some instances some elements of an 'academic' education. Given what seems to have been the often axiomatic assumption that literacy skills were unnecessary for women and the existence of the many barriers to female educational ambitions, however, it appears that female access to both schooling and to education was more restricted than that of male access.

Without statistical evidence of enrolment figures for the two sexes for 1818, the relative levels of access to day and Sunday schooling for boys and girls cannot be calculated but impressionistic evidence does permit the tentative suggestion of an imbalance in enrolment at day school that favoured boys, with a reversed pattern in the Sunday schools favouring girls. By 1833, despite the many difficulties encountered by the providers of public schools the picture of educational provision was much extended. That much of the schooling available to working people was provided by private initiative must not be

forgotten, particularly as the presence of such schools indicates a relatively healthy demand for schooling for children of both sexes, whatever the sources of the schools' popularity. Nevertheless, overall statistics of school enrolment, at both public and private schools, continue to suggest a strong imbalance in the proportions of girls enrolled in day school, with an estimated numerical dominance of over 129,000 more boys than girls on the books. (164)

The figures also suggest, however, that girls outnumbered boys in the infant schools, with an estimated proportion of 51.2% female pupils. (165) When it is remembered that girls probably also outnumbered boys in the Sunday schools, with a proportion of roughly 50.4% girls representing nearly 10,000 more girls than boys on the books, (166) a picture of gender differentiated patterns of school enrolment begins to emerge, suggesting that girls were more likely to attend day school at a younger age than boys or to attend school part-time. (167)

These statistics must be handled with extreme caution: in addition to the well known weaknesses that marred their accuracy, a flexibility of terminology and of organisation within the schools also casts considerable doubt on the accuracy of returns within the different categories of schools.



They suggest, however, that the overall disadvantage experienced by girls was subject to qualification, with access to schooling being dependent on factors of age and locality as well as gender - and with each being related to the occupational structure of the community and to gender divisions of labour within it. Thus, a breakdown of the 1833 returns, estimating the numbers of girls and boys within the 'not specified' category on a proportional basis to show gender differences in enrolment at Infant, day and Sunday schools within the regions, shows different patterns of schooling for boys and girls intersecting with different levels of access. (table 2).

The patterns were not uniform. Norfolk girls were under represented even at Infant school level, but in Suffolk and Lancashire they represented the higher proportion of scholars in the schools. The pattern of higher Sunday school enrolment for girls was maintained across all three counties, however, demonstrating the importance of part-time schooling for girls, whether as substitute for or in support of day schooling. (169) And while girls were underrepresented in day schools in all three areas, the significance of location is brought sharply into focus by the relatively greater disadvantage experienced by Lancashire girls, with a far lower

proportion of girls enrolled at day school than in Norfolk and Suffolk.

Table 2  
Gender Differences in School Enrolment 1833 (168)

<u>County</u>	<u>Infant</u>	<u>Daily</u>	<u>Day &amp; Infant</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
Lancashire				
boys	48.9%	58.7%	58.1%	48.8%
girls	51.1%	41.3%	41.9%	51.2%
Suffolk				
boys	48.2%	53.2%	52.9%	49%
girls	51.8%	46.8%	47.1%	51%
Norfolk				
boys	50.6%	53.1%	53%	47.9%
girls	49.4%	46.9%	47%	52.1%

This point can be taken further, with an examination of day school returns for the country as a whole suggesting that differences between the numbers of boys and girls on the books of day schools in the more rural counties were much less than those in more industrial and/or urbanised counties. (170) Further, the detailed returns for Norfolk and Suffolk suggest

that though boys were in the majority at day schools, the overall picture may have been distorted by their presence in larger numbers in the urban schools, obscuring a greater equality of enrolment - if not a majority of girls - in the day schools in the rural areas. (171)

No firm conclusions can be drawn from these figures, but the suggestion that provision and take up of schooling operated to give a low priority to girls precisely in those areas where social control purposes were seen to give a premium to their education gives strong support to the argument that there were serious disjunctions between theoretical imperatives and local provision and utilisation of schooling.

Further light can be thrown on the issue of girls' access to schooling in the three counties by consideration of the relative proportions of the child populations at school broken down into gender groups. Following Marsden (172), the child population of each county was calculated on a basis of one-sixth of the adult population, equally divided between the two sexes, to suggest the following, admittedly very crude, breakdown in patterns of day and infant and Sunday school enrolment. (Table 3)

Table 3

Estimated Gender Differences in School Enrolment as  
Proportions of the Child Population 1833 (173)

Day school

	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Suffolk	61%	55%
Norfolk	57%	51%
Lancashire	51%	37%

Sunday School

Suffolk	60%	61%
Norfolk	45%	49%
Lancashire	87%	91%

Considered in this way, the statistics suggest that expansion in the provision of schooling in Suffolk and Norfolk, despite the deficiencies of provision that still remained, meant that girls were more likely to be on the books of a day school than not - though, given that the statistics measure the day school enrolment of children from all social classes, it is probable that the children of agricultural



workers were still unlikely to go to a day school. The figures also suggest (the crudeness of the calculations disallows any stronger emphasis than this) that the 'normal' Norfolk pattern for both boys and girls was one of a relatively high (in comparison with the industrial districts) level of day school attendance leading to a lower incidence of Sunday schooling. with what seems to have been a relatively unusual situation where it appears that Norfolk girls were actually more likely to attend a day school than a Sunday school. This does not seem to have been the case in Suffolk, however, where a lower proportion of girls in the day schools and a minimally higher proportion of girls in the Sunday schools suggests that the Sunday schools may have been more important as a substitute form of schooling for them.

Patterns of day school enrolment in Lancashire are again what one would expect, with a lower proportion of the child population overall on the books of a day school, and a much lower proportion of girls at day school compared with boys and with girls in the other two counties. The startling figures are those for Sunday school enrolment, suggesting an appetite for education that extended across the great majority of the child population, particularly amongst the girls. The question of what the Sunday schools had to offer

them in terms of curriculum provision is examined in the next chapter.

### Conclusions

There are a number of ironies in the conclusions to be drawn from the evidence presented in this chapter, with the theoretical imperatives that informed the purposes of educating girls being so distorted in the processes of implementation that practice almost contradicted policy. For while anxieties about the corruption of social relationships and the degeneration of the 'lower orders' gave an urgent priority to the education of girls as the chief agents of cultural reproduction, the mixture of indifference, prejudice and instrumentalism with which this rationale was received gave considerably less importance to their schooling. And though very similar responses were also evident with regard to the purposes and provision of schooling for boys, attitudes and conditions were generally more conducive to the establishment of schools for them.

Despite the best efforts of the two education Societies, particularly the National Society, the realities of the supply of, and demand for, schooling seem to have been determined as much by the conditions of the local labour market, as by the

ideologically inspired imperatives of educational enthusiasts. Instrumentalism, rather than reform, seems to have been the characteristic motivation of lay supporters of public education, and the usefulness of schooling for girls appears to have been evaluated to a great extent on the basis of its value in preparing girls for domestic service. And while some impetus was given to the formal education of boys by the enhanced occupational skills and prospects that might result, the dubious merits of formal over familial education for the duties and responsibilities of marriage and motherhood were generally outweighed by the immediate advantages of a girl's wages or her domestic assistance at home. The irony here is that in the very area where the perceived need to 'civilise' girls was greatest, the easy availability of work for women and girls in the factories discouraged the enrolment of girls in school. A further irony is apparent in the fact that despite the Herculean efforts of the National Society in Lancashire - and the relative neglect of rural counties like Suffolk and Norfolk - the level of school provision in the county was nearly the lowest in the country, probably the lowest in the industrial areas. In sum, in the area of greatest perceived need, where the greatest amount of money and probably effort was expended, the least success was

achieved, with the percentage of Lancashire girls on the books of a day school being the lowest in the country.

In the rural areas of Suffolk and Norfolk on the other hand, areas where the apparent firmness of traditional social bonds denied the same need to educate girls, conditions were such as to encourage their attendance at school - if, that is, there was a school to attend.

The final irony is that the reformist rationale of the middle classes probably found more common ground with the 'alternative' educational philosophies of the great majority of male working-class radicals than with any other group, measured in terms of their perceptions of the purposes of educating girls. For though the new and reformed society that was the dream of the Radicals was strikingly different from that of their professed 'superiors', both groups defined female education in terms of women's role in cultural reproduction and with an axiomatic adherence to gender-divisions of labour.

The final point to be made in conclusion is that Purvis's evaluation of a 'double burden' of class and gender as operating to the disadvantage of girls in limiting their access to formal schooling was correct, both in the national and the local context. There were exceptions, particularly in the case of



rural girls, which qualify the general picture of gender disadvantage and it was possible for girls to have the edge over boys when it came to access to schooling. But in the dark spots of educational destitution that Glyde described, where little or no schooling was available to the children of the rural poor, both boys and girls shared the disadvantages of their class to be deprived of formal education. To be a working-class girl was indeed to be doubly disadvantaged in terms of access to education, both in quantitative and, as the following chapter goes on to describe, also in qualitative terms.

That the government was aware of the deficiencies of educational provision with a concern sufficient to overcome the principles of laissez-faire and target identified groups of children as 'needing' compulsory schooling is indicative of the perceived importance of education as a vehicle for rescue and reform. And in the decades following the New Poor Law of 1834 and the Factory Acts of 1833 and 1844, numbers of the daughters of the rural poor of Suffolk and Norfolk and the factory girls of Lancashire were to be eligible for the extended access to schooling offered by compulsion. Though initiated in the early period, however, this was more a development of the post 1830s and will be considered in Chapter 6, where the

whole question of girls' access to schooling will be reconsidered.

## Notes

1. Johnson, R., 'Notes on the Schooling of the English Working Class', in Dale, R., Esland, G., and Mc.Donald, M., Schooling and Capitalism, London, 19876, p.49.
2. Silver, op.cit., p.25.
3. Ibid.
4. Stephens, W.B. Education, Literacy and Society 1830-1870: The Study of Diversity in Provincial England, Manchester, 1987, p.2.
5. Jones, M.G., The Charity School Movement, Cambridge 1938. Jones' suggestion of a national and continuing charity school 'movement' has been questioned by Simon. Simon, J., 'Was there a Charity School Movement?', Simon, B. (Ed.), Education in Leicestershire 1540-1940, Leicester, 1968. My own investigation of charity school provision in eighteenth-century Suffolk suggests that an initial enthusiasm was not maintained, with only schools in larger centres such as Ipswich and Bury St. Edmunds surviving into the nineteenth century.
6. The learning of literacy skills through apprenticeships seems to have declined after the mid eighteenth century. Snell, op.cit., p.260.
7. Hans, N., New Trends in Education in the Eighteenth Century, London, 1951, p.28.
8. Cobbett, R. Cottage Economy, 1822; Political Register, 1833, quoted by Johnson, R., 'Really Useful Knowledge: Radical Education and Working-Class Culture', Clarke, J., Critcher, C., and Johnson, R., (Eds.), Working-Class Culture, London, 1979, p.79.
9. Johnson, 'Really Useful Knowledge', p.79.
10. Sanderson, M., 'Literacy and Social Mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England', Past and Present, August, 1972; Sanderson M., 'Social Change and Elementary Education in Industrial Lancashire 1780-1840', Northern History, University of Leeds, vol. 3, 1968, p.136.
11. Sanderson, 'Social Change', Ibid.

12. Thompson, E.P., op.cit., p.321; Johnson, 'Really Useful Knowledge', p.81.
13. Limitations of evidence drawn from marriage registers are discussed by Sanderson in Sanderson, M., Education, Economic Change and Society in England 1750-1870, 1983, pp.9-10.
14. Thompson refers to "a leaven ... of self-educated an articulate men of considerable attainments" amongst the weaving communities of the north, and this is supported by nineteenth-century literary evidence depicting hand-weavers reading whilst working. Thompson, op.cit., p.322; Sanderson, 'Social Change', p.137.
15. All the examples given by Sanderson and Thompson are male, and though Sanderson does refer to 'children', the implicit suggestion is that girls were not included. Sanderson, 'Social Chnge', pp.136-7.
16. In Hadleigh in Suffolk, for example, of three endowments for the education of 'children', two were used for boys only. That this practice that was by no means exceptional is supported by the findings of the Taunton Commission. This showed 177,000 pounds per year being received by boys' endowed schools, and only 3,000 pounds per year by girls'. P.P.1829 VII, pp.607-11, P.P. 1819, IX.2, vol.2, p.891; Turner, B., Equality for Some, London, 1974, p.108.
17. Laqueur, T.W., 'Debate: Literacy and Social Mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England', Past and Present, August, 1974, pp.96-7; Sanderson, 'Education', pp.14-15.
18. Sanderson, 'Social Change', pp.138-9.
19. They were employed in factory weaving at a younger age than in domestic weaving. ibid, p.140.
20. Anderson, M., Family Structure in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire, London, 1971, p.115.
21. Anderson, 'Smelser Revisited', p.326.
22. Anderson, 'Lancashire', p.114; Anderson, 'Smelser Reviited', p.323; Sanderson, 'Social Change', pp.142-3.
23. Anderson, 'Smelser Revisited', p.327.



24. Smelser's suggestion, that the employment of their sons as piecers by the spinners was the norm, is not borne out by the evidence. Kay-Shuttleworth estimated that only 15% of over 3,000 piecers were related to the 837 spinners he examined. Anderson, 'Lancashire', p.117; Anderson, 'Smelser Revisited', p.324.
25. Their "migratory habits" and apparent indifference towards education militated against school attendance. Sanderson, 'Social Change', p.142.
26. Sanderson, 'Education', pp.14-15. The movement of literacy levels for women was more erratic than those for men at this point, with "quite exceptionally high scores" in the 1780s and 1790s in Ecclestone and Manchester. Stone has argued an "upsurge of literacy" after 1780 "underlying the process of industrialisation" but there is general agreement, from a wide variety of sources, regarding a trough in literacy levels in the 1810s and 1820s. Stone, L., 'Literacy and Education in England 1640-1900', Past and Present, 42, 1969, pp.69-139.
27. Sanderson, 'education', p.16.
28. Ibid.
29. This draws on Laqueur's arguments. Laqueur, op.cit., pp.102-4.
30. There is some evidence of a skills surplus of literate male workers in the early part of the nineteenth century. Sanderson, 'literacy', p.93.
31. Letter to James Martin M.P. quoted by Perkin, op.cit., p.195.
32. The Speenhamland system of poor relief, for example, may be seen as an attempt to alleviate social tensions and see other examples in Stevenson, J., 'Social Control and the Prevention of Riots in England 1789-1929', in Donajgradski, J.P., Social Control in Nineteenth-Century Britain, London, 1977, pp.41-42.
33. 'A Friend to Virtue', a letter in support of Sunday schools 1784, quoted by Goldstrom, J.M., Education: Elementary Education 1780-1900, London, 1972, p.16.

34. Letter to the Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1801, quoted by Digby, A., and Searby, P., op.cit., p.75.
35. The charity schools also implicitly rejected the aim of developing individual abilities through education - a philosophy that was being developed in the later eighteenth century by Pestalozzi and his supporters. Henriques, op.cit., pp.202-3.
36. Quoted in P.McCann, 'Popular Education, Socialisation and Social Control: Spitalfields 1812-1824', in Mc.Cann, P. (Ed.), op.cit., p.9.
37. Sarah Trimmer, Reflections on the Education of Children in Charity Schools, 1792, p.7.
38. Johnson, 'Notes', p.45.
39. Quoted by ibid, p.48.
40. Teachers' Minute Book, Calcutt St. Sunday school, Manchester, entry for April 1820.
41. Lancaster, J., 'Outlines of a Plan for Educating Ten Thousand Poor Children', 1806, quoted by Hurt, J., Education in Evolution: Church, State Society and Popular Education, London, 1971, 1972 edition, p.14.
42. Johnson, 'Notes', pp.47-8.
43. Bell, A., Elements of Tuition, 1813, quoted by Hurt, op.cit., pp.11, 14.
44. Annual Report of the British Society, 1818, p.55.
45. Annual Report of the National Society, 1818, p.252.
46. Annual Reports of the British Society, 1820, p.121; 1818, p.55.
47. Lawson, J., and Silver, H., A Social History of Education in England, London, 1973, p.235.
48. Goldstrom gives the text of the most well known part of this speech. Goldstrom, op.cit., p.29.
49. Trimmer, op.cit., p.12; Trimmer, S., The Oeconomy of Charity, 1801, vol.1, p.24.
50. "in some instances where it was intended only to establish a boys' school the Committee have made

their grant subject to the express condition that a girls' school also should be provided". Annual Report of the National Society, 1825, p.13.

51. Annual Report of the National Society, 1832, p.25.
52. Annual Report of the National Society, 1829, p.13. Author's calculation.
53. It is often not clear, because of the looseness of contact between the British Society and local branches, which schools actually were in association. Sanderson, M., 'The National and British School Societies in Lancashire: The Roots of Anglican Supremacy', in Cook, T., (Ed.), Local Studies and the History of Education, London, 1972, p.8.
54. Annual Report of the British Society, 1826, p.33.
55. In Manchester, for example, a local committee appointed to scrutinise these returns found that schools had been omitted or wrongly classified and that false returns had been made. It was concluded, "the total error in these returns for Manchester alone was 181 schools". Annual Report of the National Society, 1836, p.75.
56. Author's calculations, based on summary figures for England. P.P. 1835, XLIII, p.1208.
57. Ibid.
58. "In parishes where the want of opulent inhabitants often occasions the annual subscriptions to be inadequate to the purposes of establishing separate schools for Boys and Girls, the Committee find that a plan, very successfully adopted in many instances, has been to establish one daily school under an active female, into which all the girls are received, and those of the boys under 9 years of age, while supplemental to this, a Sunday school regularly kept by a master receives the boys of all ages". Annual Report of the National Society, 1819, p.15. The mixed day schools of rural villages seem largely to have conformd to this model, but more by accident than design.
59. Laqueur, for example, has agued that the social control purposes of the early Sunday schools became superceded in the 1820s as the working classes implemented their own conception of



- Sunday schooling. Laqueur, T.W., Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working-Class Culture, Yale, 1976. Dick has attacked this argument, Dick, M., 'The Myth of the Working-Class Sunday School', History of Education, 1980, vol.9, no.1.
60. Annual report of the Stockport Sunday School, 1810-1811, p.6.
  61. Purvis, J., 'The Double Burden of Class and Gender in the Schooling of Working-Class Girls in Nineteenth-Century England, 1800-1870', in Barton, L., and Walker, S., Schools, Teachers and Teaching, Lewes, 1981, p.108.
  62. The education of girls was seen to be a concern of females and responsibility for the day-to-day management (though not for major decisions or financial management) was delegated to the Ladies' Committee. This committee submitted reports to the male Management Committee. See, for example, 'Rules for Schools in Association with the British Society', P.P. 1816, IV.2, p.21. The likely effects of this would have been to limit the male management committees' knowledge of the daily procedures of girls' schools and to reinforce their prime interest in those schools with which they had a direct involvement, that is, the schools for boys.
  63. Annual Report of the British Society, 1833, p.7.
  64. Ibid.
  65. See, for example, Annual Reports of the National Society for 1817, p.60; 1818, p.159-60; 1821, p.10. Annual Reports of the British Society, 1815, pp.60, 109; 1817, p.69; 1818, p.97.
  66. Annual Report of the British Society, 1815, p.109.
  67. The dearth of published materials on the subject of working-class girls' education in the nineteenth century does encourage gross generalisations based on national figures. Such generalisations also present a very static picture of their education. Bryant, review of Purvis 'Hard Lessons', op.cit.,
  68. Stephens, 'Education', pp.12-13, appendix J, p.252.



69. Ibid.
70. Purvis, 'Double Burden', p.108.
71. Stephens suggests a demarcation level of 7% marking off those agricultural counties with good provision from those where industrial development or domestic industries worked against high levels of day schooling. Stephens, ibid, p.12-13.
72. Calculated from the education returns for 1818, P.P. 1819, IX.2, vol.2, pp.877-915. 80 of these parishes had a Sunday school. Marsden, W.E., Unequal Educational Provision in England and Wales - the Nineteenth-Century Roots, London, 1987, p.28.
73. Population growth preceded the shift to factory production, with increases of around 75% in the county population between 1750 and 1780, and of 60% between 1781 and 1800. Laqueur, 'Debate', p.100.
74. Sanderson, 'Literacy', p.77.
75. Ibid, p.78.
76. This varied. Local immigration gave Norwich a 35% increase in population between 1811 and 1821, for example, and Norfolk population growth was around half the national average between 1831 and 1851. Digby, op.cit., pp.9, 20. Fearn, H., 'Chartism in Suffolk', in Briggs A., (Ed.), Chartist Studies, London, 1962, p.150.
77. Letters filed under reference NDS/275, Norfolk County Record Office, Norwich.
78. Stephens identified nine factors as being crucial to the provision of schooling within specific localities. These were: the extent and nature of industrialisation; the occupational structure of the community; the nature of urbanisation, demography, local religious and political affiliations; the racial mix of the community (particularly the extent of Irish immigration); the relative wealth of the community and its pattern of land holding; geographical features. Stephens, W.B., Regional Variations in Education During the Industrial Revolution: The Task of the Local Historian, Leeds, 1973, p.4.
79. Stephens, 'Education', p.72.

80. This attitude was also shared by "the better educated classes" he said. P.P. 1845, XXXV, p.102.
81. Stephens, 'Education', p.79.
82. P.P. 1819, XI.2, vol.2, p.913.
83. Snell, op.cit., pp.5-9.
84. Pamphlet published by the Norfolk and Norwich National Society, October, 1812.
85. Minute Book of the Norfolk and Norwich National Society, 1824-5.
86. Interdenominational rivalry was said to have given a spur to the efforts of Suffolk National Society supporters. Glyde, J., Suffolk in the Nineteenth Century: Physical, Moral, Social, Religious and Industrial, London, 1851, p.209.
87. Marsden, op.cit., p.46.
88. There were around 65 Anglican day schools in Suffolk and 71 in Norfolk by this date, and around 13 schools in each county associated with dissenting groups. Stephens, ibid, pp.352, 358.
89. there was a growth of 2.6% and 2% respectively in the proportion of Suffolk and Norfolk populations on the books of a day school. Comparable figures for other counties in the South-East were 3.3% Essex, and 3.4% Kent, Surrey and Middlesex. Calculated from tables in Stephens, ibid, p.352
90. Glyde, 'Suffolk', p.246.
91. In Suffolk, for example, around one-sixth of parishes (102 of 633) had no day school in 1833 and 46 of these had no Sunday school either. Calculated from the 1833 Returns for Suffolk, P.P. XLII, pp.896-932.
92. Sanderson, 'National and British', p.13.
93. Sanderson, ibid, p.12.
94. Calculated by Sanderson, ibid, pp.10-11,18; Stephens calculated a "very approximate and probably underestimated" number of 88 Anglican day schools in Lancashire in 1833. Stephens, ibid, p.358.

95. Stephens, ibid, pp.89-91.
96. Stephens, ibid.; Sanderson, ibid, p.16.
97. Stephens, ibid, pp.358-360; Marsden, ibid, p.37; Sanderson, ibid, p.19.
98. Sanderson, ibid, pp.15-16.
99. Sanderson, ibid.; Marsden, ibid, pp.33-34; Stephens, ibid, p90.
100. Lancaster, Bolton, Great Harwood, Rochdale, Manchester, Blackburn and Bury probably each had a British school. Warrington and Downham each had what was probably a very short lived British school. Sanderson, ibid, p.20.
101. The British school in Manchester had around 1,000 pupils, but at best only around 12,000 children were enrolled at a British school at this date. Sanderson, ibid, p.19.
102. Stephens calculated 88 Anglican schools, 65 specific dissenter day schools and 32 Roman Catholic schools in Lancashire in the 1833 returns. Stephens, ibid, pp.358-9.
103. Only Monmouthshire beat Lancashire for a place at the bottom of the league. Stephens, ibid, p.352.
104. West Yorkshire had a growth rate of 1.4%, but with a healthier starting point of 6.2% of the population on the books of a day school in 1818 had achieved a proportion of 7.6% of the population at day school in 1833. Calculated from Stephens, ibid. The later starting date of industrialisation in West Yorkshire was probably a major contributory factor in the area not being targetted for special attention along with Lancashire.
105. Stephens, ibid, pp.5, 30.
106. Quoted by Maclure, J.S., Educational Documents: England and Wales 1816-1968, London, 1972, p.19.
107. Around 63% of Lancashire children enrolled as day scholars were on the books of private schools, 61% in Suffolk and 59% in Norfolk. Stephens, ibid, p.352.
108. Ibid, p.92.



109. Minutes of the School Committee 1824, in Murphy, J., 'The Rise of Public Elementary Education in Lancashire', Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1966, p.128.
110. Local ladies, of course, may have had a direct association with the school. See also the part played by the clergyman's daughter in helping girls find places in Thompson, F., Lark Rise to Candleford, 1984, Harmondsworth, p.158.
111. Annual Report of the British Society, 1826, p.48.
112. This draws on Johnson's point that "we may understand radical education as an attempt to expand and develop those areas of autonomy and control over reproduction which remained following the erosion of the educative functions of the family". Johnson, 'Really Useful Knowledge', op.cit., p.101.
113. Mechanics Magazine, October, 1823, quoted by Simon, B., Studies in the History of Education 1780-1870, London, 1960, p.215.
114. See, for example, William Thompson's criticisms of the monitorial system in ibid, p.207-8.
115. According to Simon, for example, the Mechanics' Institutes of Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester were established by local business men in order to "instill their own doctrines of the freedom of industry and the security of property". Simon, Ibid, p.261.
116. Johnson, 'Really Useful Knowledge', p.84.
117. Johnson, 'Notes', p.50.
118. Ibid, pp.45, 47.
119. William Thompson, quoted by Simon, ibid, p.208.
120. Johnson, 'Really Useful Knowledge', pp.79-80.
121. Taylor, op.cit., p.229.
122. Johnson, 'Really Useful Knowledge', p.82.
123. Thompson, E.P., op.cit., p.183; Johnson, 'Really Useful Knowledge', p.96.



124. See, for example, Hannah Mitchell's comments on the practical difficulties of 'fitting in' suffrage activities around housework and child care. Liddington and Norris, op.cit., pp.16, 46, 140, 222.
125. The Co-operative Magazine, 1826, in Taylor, op.cit., p.233.
126. Simon, op.cit., p.214, n.2.
127. The Pioneer, 18/9/1832, in Flett, K., 'The Theory and Practice of Really Useful Knowledge', unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of London, 1983, p.52.
128. Laqueur, 'Religion and Respectability', p.90.
129. The Pioneer, 8/2/1834 and 26/10/1833 in Flett, ibid.
130. The issue of women's membership was, according to Taylor, "one lively point of dispute" in the competition that developed between the Mechanics' Institutes and the Owenite Halls. Taylor, op.cit., p.233. There was, in the 1830s and 1840s, even a small group of women lecturers who spoke on women's rights in education, marriage and divorce. Purvis, 'Hard Lessons', p.153.
131. Similarly, political radicalism was essentially a movement of the industrial areas of the North and Midlands, though cities like Norwich, with long dissenting traditions, also contained numbers of radicals. Somon, op.cit., p.189; Thompson, E.P., op.cit., pp.211, 513.
132. Yarmouth had a day school and a small Hall of Science, Ipswich had an Owenite Institute. Taylor, op.cit., p.233.
133. Quoted by Taylor, op.cit., p.235.
134. The Pioneer, 8/2/1834, New Moral World, 18/10/1838, quoted by Taylor, op.cit., p.232.
135. Ibid, p.234.
136. Ibid, pp.232-3.
137. Detrouisier, R., 'An Address Delivered at the New Mechanics' Institution', in Purvis, Ibid, p.101.

138. Taylor, op.cit., p.234.
139. Johnson, 'Really Useful Knowledge', pp.86-7, 94.
140. Ibid, pp.79-80.
141. Simon, op.cit., p.193.
142. Purvis, ibid, p.101.
143. Taylor discusses the unresolved tensions within Owenism regarding the 'moral mission' of women within the processes of social regeneration. Taylor, ibid, p.50 *passim*.
144. Johnson, 'Really Useful Knowledge', pp.75-6, 91-4.
145. The decision as to which school to attend or even whether to attend school at all was sometimes taken by children themselves. Gardner, op.cit., p.29, n.52.
146. Ibid, p.92; Johnson, 'Notes', p.44.
147. Middle-class observers seem to have viewed the private schools with some approval in this early period, but the refusal of working-class people to abandon these schools in favour of the 'superior' provided schools seems to have led to increasing hostility against them. Gardner, ibid, p.82.  
As the public schools were 'good' schools, any schools that did not conform to the model were, ipso facto, 'bad' schools. Private schools for girls, however, seem to have been viewed with less disapproval than those for boys. See Chapter 5.
148. The Manchester Statistical Society stated that a desire for children "to be taken care of and out of the way at home" was "the principle object" of sending children to private dame schools. Report of the Manchester Statistical Society on Education in Manchester, 1834, p.5. It is possible that a willingness to accept young children contributed to the popularity of the private schools for girls, enabling a girl to take care of younger siblings and attend school. Some public schools also took younger children to encourage the attendance of older girls. See chapter 8.

149. Some public schools prohibited 'finery' for girls. See chapter 8. Some of the punishments advocated by Lancaster, for example, were quite hair-raising, including stringing naughty children up in baskets suspended from the ceiling.
150. P.P. 1870, LIV, p.54.
151. Gardner, ibid, pp.92, 100.
152. Some did - opening a private school was a recognised means whereby political radicals could support themselves. Johnson, 'Really Useful Knowledge', pp.81-2.
153. Laqueur, op.cit., p.149.
154. Ibid, pp.193-4.
155. P.P. 1816, IV, p.79; also see ibid, pp.174-5.
156. Ibid, pp. 239, 193.
157. See also note 59 above. The Anglican Sunday schools of Suffolk and Norfolk were very unlikely to have implemented a progressive view of education. See Kirk for a discussion of the wider dimensions of Laqueur's arguments, Kirk, N., The Growth of Working-Class Reformism in Mid-Victorian England, Beckenham, 1985, pp.178-182.
158. Laqueur, op.cit, pp.179-86; Stephens presents evidence of a 'working-class ethos' in Leeds' Sunday schools in the 1820s, as local people replaced middle-class teachers. Stephens, W.B., 'Elementary Education and Literacy 17710-1870', in Fraser, D., (Ed.), A History of Modern Leeds, Manchester, 1980, p.227.
159. Johnson has argued that, if this was done, it was done "in defiance of the objects of their founders ... Educational apparatuses commonly work like this - 'behind men's backs'. But this leaves us without a link expressed in human intention and motive". Johnson, 'Notes', p.47. I take the inclusion of reports proclaiming the successes of schools in terms of the 'superior' occupational achievements of former pupils in the annual reports of the parent society as implying the tacit approval of the central committee.



160. Stephens, ibid, p.232.
161. See, for example, Annual Reports of the British Society for 1826, p.48; 1831, pp.78,86; 1832, p.56; 1838, p.81.  
Sanderson argues a high degree of inter-generational mobility amongst boys educated in charity schools in Lancashire between 1770 and 1816. Sanderson, 'Literacy', op.cit., pp.96-7. A perception of improved prospects is probably as influential as actual evidence of those who had advanced through education, but hopes and ambitions are impossible to quantify.
162. Marsden, op.cit., p.28.
163. Though there is no clear relationship between any obvious social or economic determinants of the distribution of Sunday schools. Laqueur, op.cit., p.59.  
High levels of Sunday school attendance could be linked with low levels of day school attendance, with the Sunday schools providing, as in Lancashire, a substitute for day schooling. Alternatively, high day school attendance could be linked to high Sunday school attendance, with the Sunday schools supplementing day schooling. Part-time schooling could also mean, as it did in Suffolk and Norfolk, a seasonally related pattern of school attendance, according to the demands of the agricultural calendar.
164. Summary figures for England give the following returns:
- |         |               |         |
|---------|---------------|---------|
| Infants | male          | 29,000  |
|         | female        | 30,443  |
|         | not specified | 27,688  |
| Daily   | male          | 529,900 |
|         | female        | 420,027 |
|         | not specified | 185,071 |
- P.P. 1835, XLIII, p.1208
165. Calculated from Ibid
166. Assuming a proportional breakdown of the 'not specified' category, the numbers of children on the books of Sunday schools has been calculated as 682,961 boys and 692,785 girls. P.P. 1835, XLIII, p.1208.
167. Though it must be remembered that numbers of schools were classified incorrectly in the 1833



returns and that children were not necessarily grouped according to their age. It would be quite possible, for example, for an older girls to be in an 'infant' group or school if this was appropriate to her level of attainment.

168. Calculated from the 1833 returns. P.P.1835, XLI, p.473 (Lancashire); P.P. 1835, XLII, p.652 (Norfolk) and P.P. 1835, XLIII, p.932, (Suffolk).

169. Note 163 above.

170. Returns were selected from the national summary of returns according to a rough equality, in numerical terms, in day school enrolment for the two sexes. The proportions of male and female pupils were then calculated, again with a proportional calculation of the 'not specified' category, to give the following breakdown:

	Girls	Boys
Cambridgeshire	48%	52%
Devon	58%	42%
Hereford	50.2%	49.8%
Essex	49%	51%
Hunts.	49.5%	50.5%

These were compared with counties with a high level of urban and/or industrial areas.

	Girls	Boys
Notts.	45%	55%
Derbshire	45%	55%
Warwick.	45%	55%
Surrey	43%	57%
Kent	44%	56%

These figures suggest, firstly, that the rural/urban &/or industrial distinction is valid, and secondly, that girls in Lancashire were more acutely disadvantaged, in terms of their access to day schooling, than girls in any other part of the country.

calculated from summaries of returns in P.P. 1835, XLI, p.64 (Cambs.), p.166 (Derbyshire), p.214 (Devon), p.298 (Essex), p.380 (Hunts.), p.420 (Kent); P.P. 1835, XLII, p.736 (Notts.); P.P. 1835, XLIII, p.958 (Surrey), p.1012 (Warwick.)

171. This point is taken further in chapter 8, when the more detailed evidence available for the later period is considered.

172. Marsden, op.cit., p.28. He calculates the child population as one sixth of the adult population in this period.
173. These calculations are based on the 1833 returns as in note 168 above.

## The Schools in Practice in the Early Nineteenth Century

This chapter considers what access to schooling really meant, in terms of the learning experiences both intended, and actually provided for girls. It begins with an examination of curriculum provision, exploring possible disjunctions between intentions and schooling practices across the different forms of schooling available to girls of this class and evaluating their contributory determinants. Comparisons are also drawn between developments in the curriculum available to girls and that provided for boys, to explore the extent to which gender divisions of labour and patriarchal values informed the nature and quality of what was taught in the schools.

Attention is also given to the 'hidden' curriculum of provided schooling to explore the attitudes and values embedded in the rules and routines of schools, the literature made available to pupils and the intentions and expectations of managers and teachers.

Many of the issues raised in the previous chapter remain directly relevant. What sort of learning did the working classes wish for their daughters and sons? Did they see the public schools as providing really useful knowledge to both their sons and their

daughters? And, given the problems of funding identified earlier, to what extent did limited resources operate to influence policies and practices of curriculum provision? As before, an attempt is made to place the girls themselves at centre stage for, much as their access to education was dependent on a whole range of factors beyond the issue of provision alone, so also the nature and quality of girls' learning experiences was not solely determined by what was taught in the schools. And in asking, what did girls learn?, the powerful influence of the 'hidden' curriculum of family and community experiences must also be recognised.

The chapter ends, therefore, with an evaluation of the learning experiences of girls, drawing on autobiographical and other evidence to include girls' own views regarding the nature and quality of their education and schooling experiences. Evidence of male and female literacy levels across and within the two geographical regions is also included to explore differences in the standards of literacy attained by the two sexes.

### Curriculum Policies

Embedded within the new concept of formal schooling as a means of mass social reform was the Protestant



and Evangelical belief that this was to be effected by the dissemination of Christian belief through the ranks of the lower orders, via the religious education of their children. The mere memorising of the Scriptures was, however, inadequate to the purpose; it was necessary that each individual should have personal access to the word of God through reading the Bible and, therefore, it was also necessary to teach the children of the poor to read.

(1) Despite objections that an ability to read would tempt the poor to read seditious political literature, religion and reading became the staple elements of curriculum provision in the early Sunday schools of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The aims of the National Sunday school for girls in Bath, for example, were stated to be the instruction of the girls in "the first principles of the established religion, and to teach them reading sufficient to enable them to peruse the New Testament", (2) and this sort of curriculum seems to have been representative of those pursued in the great majority of schools at this point. Certainly, it was typical of the basic curriculum provision in the day schools established under the auspices of the educational societies, with some extension of the programme to include writing and possibly also basic arithmetic for children in the more advanced classes.

Of equal, if not greater importance to curriculum content, however, was the organisation and management of the school which was to transmit, via the rules and routines of school life, the values and attitudes felt to be appropriate to the child's station in life. Strict rules were commonly drawn up requiring parents to ensure the children were clean and tidy with short hair, and were punctual and regular in attendance, (3) while in some schools children were even expected to memorise the school time-table, to reinforce the expectation of punctuality.(4) The time-work disciplines of the industrial work-world would thus successfully be instilled,(5) and children be trained to habits of regularity, order and restraint through the structured experiences of schooling and the values embedded in the hidden curriculum of school life.

This was most clearly expressed in the monitorial system adopted by the National and British Societies where every aspect of school life was carefully regulated in an hierarchical system of organisation with ordered routines and set procedures designed to make the schools operate like a well-oiled machine of instruction. The importance of such experiences in the development of desirable behaviours was emphasised by Lancaster,

On the subject of order, and the necessity of it in all human affairs, the teacher may observe, that order is Heaven's first law; and show the youths under his care, that subversion of order in the least degree would produce confusion. (7)

The system was both economical and it was efficient, and it was received with enthusiasm by the local branches of the two Societies as the solution to the challenge of educating the poor. The Norfolk and Norwich Society, for example, extolled the virtues of this model curriculum to subscribers in the following terms:

An ardent zeal for the dispersion of the Holy Scriptures has within a few years spread itself throughout the Kingdom, but it is evident that this zeal must be unavailing unless the poor are previously taught to read: Nor is instruction in the art of reading of itself sufficient to form a child into a useful member of society, and to make him a good Christian; to accomplish this he must be trained up in moral and religious habits: The improvement visible in the conduct of the children in the schools in which the new method of instruction has been introduced is a decisive proof of the excellence of a system which facilitates education - economises time - renders instruction pleasant to the scholars - affords a constant stimulus for exertion - and

introduces that regularity, order, discipline and progressive improvement which must produce a good effect at a more advanced period of life; while above all it fires in the youthful mind those principles of religion which, by being made the rule of conduct, can alone tend to an amelioration of the national character.  
(original emphasis) (7)

Little or no discretion was to be allowed to individual teachers, with a method of training focussing on initiation into the workings of the model curriculum, (8) and with carefully prepared sets of readers, each with its accompanying teacher's manual, prescribing the content and methodology of each lesson in careful detail. (9)

Within these readers, the teaching and learning of religion took on an explicitly reformist tone, with a not so hidden curriculum extolling the strengths and merits of the social and economic status quo and the duties of individuals within it. Goldstrom has described the messages embedded in the readers in use in the schools,

Both societies wished the children to learn through their readers about the demarcations between rich and poor, and the mutual dependence of each in a harmonious society. Contentment in the station of life to which God had assigned them was an important precept. Also important was that



a child should grow up to take his place as a member of the respectable, devout and hard-working poor, and not allow himself to become one of the contemptible 'undeserving poor'. To reconcile the child to his (sic) lot, there is thorough discussion of the duties and obligations of the rich towards him. (10)

Similar materials were also used in the Sunday schools to teach the child his or her duties of obedience. A guide for teachers in Nonconformist Sunday schools written in 1816, though placing social reform below religious education as the secondary objective of Sunday school education, was also very explicit about the values and attitudes to be promoted in the schools. Teachers should be:

acquainted with the obligations of inferiors to superiors; and of persons in dependent situations in life, to those who are their supporters or employers ... Christianity, instead of sinking the distinctions of society, has elevated and guarded them ... The children of the poor ... are often exceedingly destitute of that respectful deportment towards their superiors, which the order of society necessarily requires. This defect, it is your duty, as much as possible to supply. (11)

The hierarchical and patriarchal image of society thus conveyed to children also extended into the

forms of behaviour and attitudes appropriate to gender roles. As William Allen of the British society explained to the Select Committee on the state of education in 1834, teaching children about their duties to their superiors also involved their learning "the relative duties of husbands and wives" as laid down in the Scriptures (12) and, in the Sunday Scholar's Gift, or a present for a good child published in 1814, the behaviour exhibited by little Hannah was presented as a model to be emulated by all little girls who wished to be good. She was a girl

... of temper sweet and mild  
No angry passions e're were seen  
In this engaging child.

She very soon could knit and sew  
And help her mother too  
For Hannah would not waste her time  
As idle children do.

Each sabbath morn she rose betimes  
And dressed her neat and clean  
Nor ever utter'd naughty words  
Or loitered in the street.

She knew that God would never love  
Girls that are bold and rude  
And therefore little Hannah prayed  
That he would make her good. (13)

This model of the 'ideal' curriculum as consisting of

religion and reading for both boys and girls did not remain static during the period. In much the same way that the rationale underpinning the provision of education for the lower orders became mediated by the processes of implementation, so also the model curriculum became moderated in the practices of schools. But where pragmatism, instrumentalism and the individualistic values of Dissent can be said to have subverted educational aims, to create a disjunction between theoretical purposes and the realities of schools aims and policies, curriculum implementation developed via an interactive process, with curriculum practices informing curriculum theories in an on-going developmental progression. This progress was not always smooth, nor was it uniform, with constraints of resources being one factor that delayed the implementation of curriculum 'ideals' in many schools. But in the Reports of the two Societies can be seen the gradual process of evolution whereby what was perceived to be 'good' practice in some schools was recommended as models for others to follow. And the emphasis here must be placed on the evolution of curriculum models in the plural, for what was seen to be 'good' practice in the girls' schools differed very substantially from perceptions of what was 'appropriate' or even practical for boys' schools.

### Curriculum Practices: the schools in action

Moral messages apart, there was no explicit gender differentiation in the basic curriculum of religion and reading that was presented as the initial model for day schools of the two Societies and Sunday schools. This was not the case, however, in the charity schools and the industrial schools of the period which pursued the other main route towards social reform; that of providing an education which combined the teaching of religion with vocational training.

As the product of an earlier age, the charity schools provided an education to selected members of the 'deserving' poor that was often more comprehensive, and certainly more costly, than that provided in the Sunday and day schools. Nonetheless, charity schools remained popular in the nineteenth century, particularly in the context of training deserving girls to be "well-conducted and intelligent servants", with a curriculum that combined a "moral and religious education" with practical instruction in the duties of a servant. (14) The typical routine of a girl's schooling in such an institution would thus involve a combination of practical instruction in cleaning, cookery and laundry work, needlework, and lessons in reading and religion plus regular



attendance at church - a programme that left little time for academic learning, but was said to produce the "very best and most useful class of domestic servants". (15) Older girls might have access to a slightly more extended curriculum. The trustees of the Red Maids' school in Bristol, for example, decided in 1798 that it would "be greatly conducive to their usefulness in life" for senior girls to "be able to write and (to be) conversant with the first four rules of arithmetic", but with only four hours tuition per week for only 10 to 12 girls, this innovation cannot be said to have widened the curriculum to any appreciable extent. (16)

Socialisation came high on the list of priorities within the charity schools, with an emphasis on the inculcation of a proper deference and humility that could extend beyond the immediate context of schooling to include the girls' families, their employment and even their choice of a husband. The Reverend Daniel Wilson, a minister attached to charity schools in the London area, advised the Select Committee of 1816,

We let nothing form any part of the knowledge we communicate, which tends to foster pride or elevation ... The very first thing we teach the female children especially is to correct the love of dress, and to lead them to aim at that respect

every person acquires who behaves well in their station; and to avoid on the other hand the contempt to which they will expose themselves, by aspiring to that which they can never attain, and which only draws upon them the displeasure of others and the anger of God.(17)

The schools laid down strict and far-reaching rules and regulations that often applied also to the families of pupils. Parents of pupils at St. Leonard's charity school for girls in Shoreditch, for example, were advised in 1813 that they should,

be careful to set their children good examples at home of a sober and religious behaviour, humility, contentment, and a ready submission to the duties of the station wherein God shall be pleased to place them, as the example of a parent is calculated to make a greater impression on the heart of a child, than even the instruction which they receive in school.

(18)

Parents who violated such rules, by "behaving indecently", or any other infringement of the rules ran the risk of having their daughters summarily discharged. (19) Any bad behaviour by the girls themselves was also taken very seriously, with the mistress of Saint Leonard's school being required to

keep a book to be called the black book in which the repeated faults of any of the

children such as wilfulness, swearing, taking the Lord's name in vain, or any other atrocious crime, shall be entered, and that this book be laid before the trustees every month. (20)

Punishments could be severe, with one unfortunate girl at the Blue Coat charity school in Liverpool being placed in solitary confinement for 6 months as a punishment for stealing and for the "gross depravity" of her behaviour. (21)

Socialisation could also take a more benign form, and particularly after girls had left the school, rewards (normally books on religious and moral subjects, a Bible, but sometimes money and clothes), were often given to encourage 'appropriate' behaviour. Employment in service or other suitably feminine occupations was seen as a continuation of the educative process, and schools often took great care to ensure that girls went to a suitable 'place'. (22) This benign oversight of a girl's progress in the outside world could also extend to the payment of a marriage portion - but only where the prospective husband could also demonstrate a 'good character'. (23)

The charity schools were not without their critics, and there were even those who condemned the narrowness of the schools' purposes. A social class dimension is evident here, with a perception that the

charity schools were intended more for the higher ranks of the lower orders or for the daughters of families in reduced circumstances. Nevertheless, as the Editor of the Bristol Observer stated, there were those who saw "no occasion for assuming that servitude is the natural or most fitting destination of poor females". (24) The practice of taking in sewing for the girls to do was condemned by one critic as exploitation of their "slavish labour", and he urged that girls should be taught a variety of skills, including bookkeeping, to enable them to contribute "to the future support of the family". (25)

Notwithstanding objections such as these, the charity schools continued to be popular, with the goal of producing good domestic servants chiming harmoniously with the instrumental attitudes so condemned by the ladies' committees of the two education societies. A charity school education, however, was expensive and, though providing a popular model for the education of girls, was inappropriate to the scale of the task of civilising the mass of the female poor. An alternative model, the school of industry, thus became popular in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Schools of industry were rather more coercive in intent than these charity schools, their particular



popularity at this time also being prompted by a reaction against the philanthropic spirit of the Sunday school movement (26) as well as the feeling that vocational training combined with an emphasis on the duties of the poor would be more effective in the desired reform of the manners of common people. That such training might also be of practical use, in effecting reform through the relief of poverty seems also to have been a motive and the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor established in 1796 gave "considerable impulse" to the combination of "manual employment and habits of labour with religious and useful learning". (27)

Schools of industry were frequently not identified in their title and it is impossible to quantify the number of schools of industry established as such, but impressionistic evidence suggests that vocational training was seen, in practice, to be particularly relevant to the educational needs of girls, not least because training girls to be servants counteracted "a practical objection that has so frequently been urged, viz that education unfits the poor for their respective situations". (28)

Vocational preparation did not form a part of the model curricula of the National and British schools for either boys or girls, with the emphasis on strict regulation of behaviour and the teaching of religion

and basic literacy being seen as adequate to the reforming purposes of the schools. Nonetheless, 'industrial work' quickly became a regular feature in many schools, including the model schools of the two Societies, particularly for the girls. Indeed, there were so many incentives to include 'industrial work', notably needlework, in the curriculum of girls' schools that when questioned about the benefits to be gained from its introduction into schools, a witness to the 1834 Select Committee assumed the reference must be to boys as "the girls have invariably united industry with their establishments in the common practices of education". (29)

An immediate incentive to the introduction of 'industrial training' was the boost it gave to school funds through the money gained from the profits of the children's work. Children, both boys and girls, might make wire buttons, straw plait and straw hats, knitted stockings etc. for sale, or schools might, as was common practice, take in sewing to be done by the girls. Needlework was cheaply and easily provided and was assured of a steady sale, and it provided an ideal resource generating activity for girls. At Rochester National school, for example, the employment of girls in needlework was found to be an effective means of supplementing the salary of the school mistress. Our funds ... not sufficing to allow

the mistress such a salary as we thought she deserved and her necessities required", it was reported,

the committee have permitted her ... to add £10 per year to her salary ... by employing the girls at certain hours at needlework, on the articles of apparel in common use, and manufactured for sale in the neighbourhood. (30)

Some of the profits of their needlework could also be paid to the girls as "a compensation to the parents" for loss of earnings to encourage attendance, and in the lace making areas one school at least tried to overcome this barrier to attendance by "giving the children the profits of their work". Similarly, the clothing made by the girls might be given in prizes for attendance, a valuable inducement to families on the borderline of poverty. (31)

Perhaps most significantly, the introduction of needlework into the curriculum for girls was felt to be appropriate to their feminine role; it helped to prepare them for employment in domestic service and gave them skills that would be useful to them as wives and mothers. Indeed, it was felt to be so suitable and so useful that both the British and the National Societies organised the timetable of the central schools to include needlework in the girls' curriculum, and gave strong encouragement to schools

in association to follow suit. The needlework department in the girls' central school of the British society was said to be "an object of prominent attention" and was encouraged "as tending to promote habits of useful industry,... (and).. as a source of income to the school", (32) and the National Society adopted the policy of devoting half of the school hours every day to needlework, "with the view of ensuring due attention" to the subject in the girls' school. (33)

Thus, the ideal curriculum for girls, as recommended by the two societies, became one in which as much time and attention was devoted to the acquisition of the practical and vocational skill of needlework as to the development of literacy and religious knowledge. And the National Society, which was in effect the market leader of mass elementary schooling, began to make a clear distinction between what was suitable for girls and what was appropriate for boys. In reporting the results of an inquiry concerning works of industry in 1833, the Society recommended an organisation of the curriculum for girls in which an equal time would be given to needlework as to all other curriculum areas. "In a well-managed school for girls" (original emphasis), it was stated,



half the day may be given to needlework or knitting, and the other half will suffice for acquiring a knowledge of reading, writing and summing, besides a more familiar acquaintance with religious truths.

This division of time between learning and industry is actually made in the best conducted schools for females. (34)

The effects of this were several and serious, with a cumulative impact on the curriculum available both the girls and to boys. While the girls were busy with needlework, the boys were able to devote their attention to their studies to achieve higher standards of attainment. As the same National Society Report continued,

The boys, however, being rarely provided with any manual occupation, are carried forward to higher degrees of attainment in religious knowledge, as well as ciphering, writing etc. (35)

For the difficulty and expense of providing industrial work for boys often proved to be an insuperable obstacle. The Cheltenham branch of the National Society, for example, was "happy to announce" in 1816 that "the girls have been for some time regularly and beneficially employed in plain needlework and knitting" but,

The committee also lament that they have been unable, from the impoverished state of their funds, to introduce into the boys' school those employments of industry which were recommended at the general meeting.

(36)

And, as the National Society reported in 1832, remark-ing the difficulty of finding suitable industrial employment for boys,

needlework has supplied ... this want as regards the girls, but it yet remains to discover a system which shall provide a general and effectual occupation for the boys". (37).

Not only did the failure to find suitable industrial work for boys allow them to devote more time to their 'academic' learning and to achieve higher standards, the organisation of the time-table was also encouraging an expansion of the basic curriculum in the boys' schools. The same National Society Report of 1833 that recommended a curriculum of the basic 3 R's, religion and needlework for girls, noted with an apparent approval that school managers were introducing subjects such as history, natural philosophy, English grammar and music for the boys in order to avoid "repetitions of a tedious and uninteresting nature" in the "superabundance of time" available to them. (38)

There is also some suggestion that the quality of the teaching might have been diminished by the inclusion of needlework as a fund-raising commercial enterprise in the girls' schools, as this could create considerable pressure on teachers. For if the words of one harassed school mistress are to be believed, the preparation of materials might occupy every evening, leaving no time for preparation of other work, for the training of monitors or for any recreation, while the collection of money and keeping of accounts for the clothing fund could take up to two hours of school time every Monday morning. (39).

Not all schools taught needlework, despite the many incentives to include this in the curriculum for girls. Failure explicitly to mention needlework in school records may have arisen from the axiomatic nature of its place in the curriculum for girls, but there were many schools which clearly did not teach needlework even as late as the 1840s and 1850s. Half the schools mentioned in the 1845 report of Inspector Allen, for example, did not teach needlework, nor many of the schools visited by the Rev. F. Watkins in 1847 or those inspected by the Rev. M. Mitchell in 1852.(40) Mr. Fletcher's report on British schools for 1847 even suggests that such teaching was relatively uncommon in the less populated districts of the North, where the co-educational village

schools were taught by a master "often without the assistance of a female teacher to instruct the girls in needlework".(41) Indeed, difficulties of resourcing, combined with a preference for male teachers for mixed schools, (42) probably meant that many village schools were unable to teach needlework, though the voluntary assistance of lady subscribers may have enabled some to overcome such 'obstacles'.

Nor did all boys have access to subjects such as history and music, an expanded curriculum provision probably being confined to only the very best schools in the larger centres. It is likely, therefore, that throughout this period, many girls in many schools shared the same curriculum as the boys, particularly those in attendance at schools located in areas of limited provision, as in the rural districts of Norfolk and Suffolk.

Nonetheless, in the 1820s, a combination of needlework with religion and basic literacy became established as the 'ideal' curriculum for girls' public day schools, mainly by virtue of its immediate, pragmatic advantages. That the provision of needlework for girls also blended harmoniously with axiomatic assumptions regarding what was appropriate to the class and gender roles of female pupils helped to sustain the momentum and direction of this curriculum development but, as yet, there was



no explicitly identifiable 'moral' or ideological imperative to support a domestic orientation to girls' education. It merely represented, at this point, something that was profitable to the schools and useful to their female pupils.

#### **Really Useful Knowledge: working-class views**

It was argued in the previous chapter that, as institutions dependent on voluntary attendance, the schools necessarily had to pay some heed to consumer demand, particularly if competing against other schools for pupils. As Laqueur has argued in relation to Sunday schools, parents and children "discriminated between schools on the basis of the education on offer", with children remaining longer at those schools where more subjects were offered and/or better taught. (43) Hence the expansion of the secular curriculum in many Sunday schools, with the introduction of the teaching of writing and sometimes also other subjects as schools sought to attract and retain pupils by providing instruction in what the working classes thought was really useful learning. (44) Working people had their own views on the purpose of schooling. They did not want the teaching of religion to be the main focus of a "moralistic curriculum", (45) and wanted the schools

to provide what middle-class educationists often dismissed as 'mere instruction', that is, the teaching of basic skills of literacy that would be useful to children in adult life.

The teaching provided in a number of Sunday schools and their associated evening classes was, therefore, extended beyond the religion and reading that was originally seen to be appropriate, to provide instruction in basic skills and secular subjects. The Anglican schools in Clitheroe, for example, established night classes where children (presumably boys) keen to gain the best paid and prestigious apprenticeships in calico printing were able to extend their literacy skills. Those in Manchester also taught writing and arithmetic on two evenings a week, and in a number of other instances cited by Laqueur (46) the teaching of secular subjects was given prominent attention.

By 1833 the National Society, in common with many other groups involved with Sunday schools, was recommending the establishment of evening classes for this very purpose, particularly for those children unable to attend a day school. "Where the scholars of a Sunday school have not the advantage of attending a daily school", it was recommended "very great benefit may arise from assembling them one or two evenings a week ... for the boys to learn writing and

arithmetic; and the girls the same, or needlework or knitting". (47)

Caution must be exercised in evaluating the extent of such developments. Even though some of the schools were conducted for the whole of Sunday (48) and classes were held on weekday evenings, there were obvious constraints of time which limited curriculum provision. The occasional Sunday school may have taught some elementary geography, history or science in the Sunday or evening classes in this period (49) but it is more likely that the general limits of the secular curriculum were represented by basic teaching of the 3 R's. Laqueur has analysed all the evidence offered by local surveys on the subjects offered in Sunday schools between 1834 and 1843 and has concluded that "reading, writing and arithmetic generally defined the limits of a Sunday school" curriculum in the period. Almost all the Sunday schools surveyed taught reading, but with only around 18-20 per cent of the the sample teaching writing to only 20-22 per cent of scholars, and only between 5-6 per cent of schools teaching arithmetic and other subjects, (50) the Sunday schools cannot be said to have made a significant contribution to learning beyond the acquisition of basic literacy. For those girls, and there were many of them, reliant on the Sunday schools for formal education, the schools

offered very limited fare - despite the provision of evening classes in needlework.

There is no quantitative evidence available for the agricultural districts of the country, but given that competition seems to have been the spur to curriculum extension and that rural Anglican schools appear to have been amongst the most reluctant to extend secular provision,(51) there seems little basis for assuming an extension of the secular curriculum in the Sunday schools of Norfolk and Suffolk. The competitive element may possibly have encouraged some widening of the curriculum in towns such as Ipswich and Norwich,(52) and the desirability of "retaining scholars under our discipline for a greater length of time" may have obliged some schools to "carry the writing out to a greater extent" than was felt to be necessary,(53) but it is likely that, as in Rutland, "Sunday schools very rarely profess(ed) to give secular instruction" (54) in the rural areas of the two counties.

The extent to which curriculum development - and the provision of a whole range of social and welfare services (55) - was also dependent on working-class control of the Sunday schools is a matter of debate and Laqueur's perception of "a new and more progressive conception of Sunday school education" by the 1820s "as one strand of a uniquely working-class



cultural constellation" has not been universally accepted. (56) Whatever the merits of that particular argument, it is clear that, as consumers of the goods and services offered by the private schools, working-class customers did have considerable control over curriculum provision in these schools.

Criticisms of the private schools often expressed a puzzled bafflement toward a manifest preference amongst the working classes for the curriculum on offer in the private rather than the public schools. The Manchester Statistical Society, for example, argued that,

generally throughout this country, the acquisition of Reading, Writing and Arithmetic seems to be considered as constituting the finished education of the children of the lower classes of the people ... the real cultivation of the mental powers, the softening of the manners, the improvement of the character, instruction on moral and religious subjects, and all the more valuable objects of education, are totally neglected and forgotten. (57)

Exactly so, though 'rejected' would describe more appropriately a common working-class response to the moral and religious curriculum on offer in the public schools. Parents and children objected to the "instruction in moral duties and their duties to their parents" that formed the bulk of Infant school

instruction, (58) wanting their children to be taught to read and write and judging that they "learn nothing there" that was worth learning. Thus two mothers interviewed by the Manchester Statistical Society dismissed the teaching provided in the Infant schools their children had attended as being of little value,

(one) female said she had sent her child a few times, but had taken her away again, and should like to send her 'to a gradely school, where they teach 'em summat'. A collier's wife said she had taken her child away, adding, 'So long as they gon to this infant schoo' they do larn nothin'. (59)

J.R.Wood, agent of the Manchester Statistical Society, particularised the parents' objections,

I have heard complaints (about the infant schools) from the parents of the children that the children do not come on so well ... they wanted to see something, like sewing or reading, that they might have a test of the child's progress. (60)

Similarly, the monitorial schools were criticised as not teaching really useful knowledge. Parents and children disliked the hidden curriculum of the schools, their rules, their regulated organisation and their teaching methods, complaining that children "learned little and were much beat". (61) "I cannot read at all or write", complained one former pupil,

I did go to old Church-school, but twas not much good, there was nothing but boys to teach us, they did us more harm than good, they used to get us down and punish us.  
(62)

Though written as a criticism of the limitations of curriculum provision in the private schools, the following represents a pretty accurate description of what most parents wanted and what, bearing in mind the fact that around two-thirds of children who went to a day school went to a private day school, (63) the majority of 'educated' children from this class were taught. As in dame schools, reported the Manchester Statistical Society

religious instruction in common day schools is restricted to learning the Church or Assembly's Catechism by rote, and perhaps, reading the Scriptures ... Taken as a whole the utmost amount of benefit which accrues to the public from this class of schools will include facility in reading and writing and some knowledge of arithmetic; to which must be added in the girls' schools, needlework, with occasionally an acquaintance with the rudiments of grammar, history, or geography. (64)

In commenting on the nature and quality of private schooling in Northumberland, a Statistical Society

report recognised implicitly the central point at issue:

We are compelled to confess that, although the rudiments of useful learning are taught in an efficient manner, the range of instruction ... is very limited. How long reading, writing and ciphering will continue to receive the name of education we will not predict; but the time must come when the training of children shall have a more full relation to the business, duties and happiness of life. They shall then be taught not only the symbols of knowledge, but the elements of those useful arts and sciences which are likely to be connected with their future employments, and above all they will be made acquainted with the powers of their own nature, and with those laws, physical, mental, moral and religious, the observance of which is, by their Creator, rendered necessary to their happiness. (65)

The point was not, however, that the working classes were ignorant of the true benefits to be gained from formal schooling, but that their appreciation of its value was related to the immediate realities of working-class life as they experienced it, not to any Evangelically or politically inspired model of how their lives 'ought' to be lived. They did wish their children to acquire knowledge relevant to their future employment - basic literacy and really useful



skills - and, particularly amongst the more radical members of the working-class community, they did wish their children to understand the 'laws' which governed social, economic and political life. In their support for the private schools, as in their instrumental use of provided schooling, their demands for a secular curriculum in the Sunday schools and all manifestations of independent cultural forms, the working classes were displaying not 'ignorance' but an indifference towards or conscious rejection of the attempt at class-cultural control that provided schooling represented in this period. In sum, the working-class view of what constituted an 'ideal' curriculum focused on those secular elements that the providers of public schooling saw as being peripheral to the main business of schooling. Though areas of overlap existed, in the use that working-class people made of public schooling and in the teaching of secular subjects, the gulf between what different social classes saw as being appropriate in terms of the nature and content of education for the lower orders of society was, apparently, insurmountable.

Yet, though divided by apparently irreconcilable viewpoints and by barriers of mutual incomprehension, there was much common ground between different social groups and, in the case of girls' education, a

mutuality of purposes that defined the 'ideal' curriculum in terms that were broadly harmonious.

#### Towards Consensus.

Around the 1820s a cross-class consensus on the nature and quality of the schooling appropriate to girls can be seen to emerge; in the vanguard as it were, of the pragmatic merging of educational aims that was to take place in the context of boys schooling around the 1850s, of which more in chapter 7. For by the 1820s, the purposes of educating girls, as expressed in the realities of the curriculum available to them, were essentially the same in both the private and the public schools, with working-class definitions of what was really useful knowledge for girls meeting middle-class views on what constituted a good education for females of this class in pragmatic alliance.

Some points of disagreement remained to be resolved; the relative importance of religion and 'morals' in a girl's schooling and the ways and means of teaching girls the full range of practical domestic skills, but, essentially, there was broad agreement that the basic curriculum for girls should consist of the literacy skills of reading and writing and needlework. Indeed, the importance given to

needlework could give it a priority over even basic literacy. The mother of Mary Smith, for example, "looked upon reading ... as a species of idleness; very well for Sundays or evenings when baby was asleep and I was not wanted for anything else" and Mary was sent to school principally to learn to knit and to sew. (66) Attending in turn two dame schools and a parish school, her experiences of formal education were limited to a little reading and religion, with a great deal of knitting and needlework. As she commented,

A girl's education at that time consisted principally of needlework of various descriptions, from plain sewing to all manner of fancy work and embroidery ... Parents were prouder then of their daughters' pieces of needlework than of their scholarship. (67)

The educational 'deprivation' experienced by Mary Smith was relative; she was fortunate in attending a day school of any description and to acquire the skills that enabled her to read Mangnall's Questions, The Pleasing Instructor and Goldsmith's History of England, and was particularly so in having a father who, very unusually, insisted that his daughter should learn arithmetic to the high standard of long division and compound addition. (68) Nevertheless, the uniformity of her experiences across a variety of

schools, including a provided parish school, illustrates the axiomatic gender-based assumptions and divisions of labour that, when allied to practical problems of school resourcing, operated to underrate more 'intellectual' learning for girls and to differentiate sharply between the content and nature of schooling thought to be appropriate for them and that thought to be suitable for boys.

The argument can be taken further to suggest that there was also a cross-class consensus, albeit one that was largely implicit, that the type of schooling suitable for girls was one that was different from that which was felt to be suitable for boys. Thus, though private schools for girls also came in for their share of pejorative criticism, comments on their 'superiority' over comparable schools for boys may also be seen to have carried a note of tacit approval - or at least a less active disapproval of this type of schooling for girls. In Manchester, for example, the girls' private schools were said to be,

generally in much better condition than the boys' schools, and have a greater appearance of cleanliness, order and regularity. This seems to arise in part from the former being more constantly employed, and the scholars being fewer in number to each teacher. (69)

In Salford, the girls' school were said to have "a



better order and discipline" with some of the mistresses possessing "solid qualifications for their office", (70) and in Rutland, the mistresses of dame schools were said to be,

almost invariable persons of good moral character, of quiet orderly habits, cleanly in their habitations, decent in their personal appearance, and of respectful deportment. The scholars too, except in one or two instances, were found clean and tidy, ... , and generally remained orderly and quiet during the visit. (71)

The girls' private schools may indeed have been superior; with far fewer employment opportunities available to women, the average school mistress may well have been more capable than her male counterpart and the pupil/teacher ratio was frequently lower in the schools for girls. (72) Nonetheless, criticisms of the private schools in this period were largely based on their lack of 'efficiency', which, interpreted according to the prevailing educational theory, meant their non-adoption of the regulated, mechanistic system of order and pupil classification that marked the regime of the monitorial schools - the lack of which was not so serious in the girls' schools. The scanty provision of 'moral' training might be deplored but was not the homely, familial ethos of the private schools entirely appropriate for

girls? What need was there to instil the time and work disciplines of industrial capitalism in those whose workplace was to be the home? Were not the regulatory mechanical systems of the monitorial schools inappropriate, even unnecessary, for the moulding of the naturally softer female character? And was the customary practice of combining domestic tasks with teaching, or employment in needlework or washing (73) quite the distraction it was seen to be in the case of boys, reflecting as it did the familial education in domestic skills that so many public schools for girls also sought to emulate?

Parents valued private schools for their daughters because of the flexibility that enabled girls to combine their domestic responsibilities with the basic learning of literacy and needlework skills that would be useful to them in later life, and because there was no artificial, imposed gulf between familial and formal education such as there was in the public schools. And similarly, whilst deploring the lack of efficiency and order evident in such flexible arrangements, axiomatic assumptions regarding the 'natural' roles and requirements of girls probably contributed towards an evaluation of private schools for girls as being, if not good, at least less bad than those for boys. The argument is speculative rather than substantive - criticisms of

schools were invariably expressed in terms which suggest that the evaluative criteria were derived from a model of boys' schooling - but it appears that the gap that often divided consumer from provider views as to the value of private schooling for boys was considerably narrower in the case of girls, with a bridge across the cultural divide provided by a common, taken for granted assumption that the education of girls should be shaped in accordance with their role within the family.

With their familial and domestic ethos, the hidden curriculum of the private schools for girls displayed an element of compatibility with the purposes and values of provided schooling that was noticeably absent in the private schools for boys. Notwithstanding differences of detail and emphasis between the private and the public schools we see, therefore, in the curriculum of girls' schools and the fundamental values expressed therein a broadly harmonious pragmatic linking of purposes and practices across all types of provision, with the 'ideal' of girls' schooling being defined by the limits of what was required to prepare girls for domestic service and marriage and motherhood.

This is not to suggest that boys of this social class necessarily were any better served by their schooling. Few had access to a curriculum that

offered any more than the basic skills of literacy and the restrictive and limited control purposes of mass education, though beginning to crumble in some schools, still largely emphasised the inculcation of habits of obedience and conformity to the social mores of a divinely ordained social hierarchy. Neither were they any more likely to benefit from superior teaching, despite the fact that they attended the professedly superior public schools in greater numbers than girls, for problems of limited resources, poor quality teaching, and lack of order were often as detrimental to the quality of education in the publicly provided schools as in the private schools. Nevertheless, boys enjoyed a number of advantages over girls which, taken together, added to the advantages conferred by superiority of provision to increase the qualitative and quantitative differences between the education of the two sexes, at least in general terms.

In terms of their access to wider, more academic learning, for example, boys had several important advantages over girls both in the immediate and the longer term. As we have seen, the difficulties in providing industrial work for boys meant that curriculum provision retained some flexibility, with the possibility of development and expansion in response to changing perceptions of the purposes of



schooling and to 'consumer' demand from local employers and potential 'customers'. The expansion of mass elementary schooling as a voluntary enterprise was changing the dynamics of schooling, with market forces replacing patronage as the driving force of local educational development. No longer could formal schooling be presented as a charitable enterprise, with reliance on sponsored access to a scarce commodity ensuring the grateful and compliant acceptance by the working classes of whatever their patrons deemed suitable educational fare. (74) The National and British schools were increasingly having to 'sell' their educational goods in a competitive market place, and to do this they had to convince potential sponsors and customers that what they were selling was worth buying.

In the case of girls the most marketable educational commodity was already established. Though the spectrum of cross-class opinion regarding the purposes and nature of girls' education ranged from that which saw no merit in the replacement of familial education by formal schooling to that which saw schooling as an effective means of training good servants and improving the domestic and moral condition of the working-class wife and mother, the appropriateness of a domestically oriented curriculum was generally accepted. The only challenge lay in

convincing mass opinion that the public schools could do this most efficiently. But while the 'ideal' curriculum for girls effectively had been agreed, that for boys remained fluid and open to negotiation.

This was a development that was largely confined to the industrial and urban centres, for what Frith has described as "a crisis of legitimacy" brought about by the widening gap between the ideology of National education and the realities of running a working-class school in an industrial city such as Leeds (75) was not applicable to agricultural districts such as those in Suffolk and Norfolk. It was also more evident in the schools associated with Dissent than in the Anglican schools, with the individualistic values of self-help and advancement through education placing an importance on high quality teaching and learning of secular subjects that was not evident in Church schools. The expansion of the secular curriculum that was beginning to take place in boys' schools, however, was a significant indication of a trend that was to lead to increasing differentiation in the nature and quality of formal education thought to be appropriate to the two sexes. The 'ideal' curriculum was no longer defined in general terms but was now gender specific.

### Experiences of Education

In practice, gender differentiation in curriculum provision was often more potential than actual, with local variations in the conditions and experiences of schooling frequently denying the achievement of curriculum 'ideals'.

The first point to be made in this context is perhaps an obvious one, and is that, irrespective of what was taught in the schools, the nature and quality of a child's educational experience was the extent to which a boy or girl actually went to school. And, given that the majority of children, particularly girls, were not enrolled on the books of any sort of daily school, their educational experience was that of learning the skills and behaviours of adult life in the context of the family and community in much the same way that generations of children before them had done.

Distinction between familial education and formal schooling were blurred considerably, however, by irregularities of attendance, and to be enrolled on the books of a day school, whether public or private, did not mean that children were actually present in the school on a regular basis. Both boys and girls attended school or stayed away according to whether money was available for fees, the availability of

casual work, the state of the weather and a host of other factors, but the domestic usefulness of girls at home meant that their schooling was often erratic in the extreme, with days off to help with the washing, the care of younger children when mother was busy and all the other tasks of household and family care. The British Society remarked this in 1834, urging the importance of providing high quality education for girls because of "the frequency with which they (girls) are detained at home to assist in domestic concerns, even while professedly in course of attendance", (76) and school reports abound with similar complaints. Beryl Madoc-Jones's study of patterns of attendance at Mitcham National school in the 1830s also shows the erratic nature of girls' attendance with a far higher proportion of girls being dismissed for very poor attendance (or poor behaviour), though girls were also much more likely than boys to return to school after a temporary withdrawal, because their absence was for domestic reasons rather than to go to work.(77) Within the 'hidden curriculum' of family life and community experience was thus embedded the message that formal education was relatively of less importance to girls than domestic responsibilities, with schooling being 'fitted in' around the household chores in much the same way as Mary Smith's mother thought her



daughter's reading should be.

Madoc-Jones' evidence does support the argument that the occupational prospects of girls could support their attendance at school with their future employment as domestic servants encouraging a longer period of school enrolment. In Mitcham, for example, girls were enrolled at school on average for 7.9 months longer than boys and 25 per cent of girls stayed at school for more than five years compared with 14 per cent of boys.(78) The detailed evidence available in the case of Mitcham school unfortunately is rare for this period, but impressionistic evidence does suggest that in regions such as the agricultural districts of Norfolk and Suffolk, where domestic service represented the likely occupation of girls, their long-term attendance was likely to be better than that of boys.

This is not to suggest that girls necessarily gained much educational advantage from long-term attendance. This could mean, as it did for the senior girls of the Red Maids' school in Bristol and those attending St. Leonard's Charity School in Shoreditch, that girls were able to learn 'additional' subjects such as arithmetic. (79) But for many girls, a longer period of school attendance might simply mean more time being spent on sewing. This was the case at the central National school, where the time devoted to

sewing in classes for the older girls was such that the teaching of reading, writing and religion was limited to only one hour per day.(80) Though school attendance might be supported by occupational prospects, the schooling experiences of girls, like their experiences within the family, conveyed consistently the same educational message - that 'intellectual' accomplishment was irrelevant to the main business of life.

In addition, few girls in the two regions would have had access to 'good' schooling. Whilst Lancashire girls from the factory districts were sorely disadvantaged in terms of access to schooling, the relative advantages enjoyed by the rural girls of Norfolk and Suffolk were severely reduced by qualitative as well as quantitative limits on schooling provision.

The local branches of the National Society in the two counties made considerable efforts to improve the quality of provision, establishing training schemes in connection with the central schools in Bury St. Edmunds, Ipswich and Norwich and sending teachers into the field to organise village schools (81) but limited funds meant only low salaries could be paid, and as Glyde was to comment, "this deficiency of proper stipends causes a number of very inefficient teachers to be connected with our elementary

schools".(82) It was rare for children to be taught in a purpose built school room, with schools being conducted frequently in cottages, hired rooms or in the Church, (83) and schools often lacked the most basic resources. Conditions were often little better in the town schools at this point, with few well equipped or well staffed schools in Norwich, for example, even as late as the early 1840s. (84)

Given that the 'superiority' of boys' schooling was more often potential than actual, the degree to which girls' experiences were different or inferior to those of boys in the reality is not clear cut. Impressionistic evidence suggests that it was only in the best schools, located largely in the market towns and smaller non-industrial cities that the 'ideals' of curriculum were realised through good quality teaching, and though gender differentiation would have been prominent in these schools, it is likely that many boys and girls were taught the same very basic curriculum in many schools. What is learned, however, is not simply dependent on what is taught in the formal curriculum, and taking educational experiences as a whole to include both the experiences of family life, the informal as well as the formal curriculum, and the 'knock on' effects of these in relation to girls' access to schooling and their experiences of teaching and learning, it is

clear that girls' 'academic' attainments were limited by their gender as well as by their class. The lower level of female attainments, particularly the low levels of female literacy, confirms a picture of educational disadvantage for girls.

### Levels of Attainment

Beyond impressionistic and often subjective accounts of the quality of teaching and learning in the provided and public schools, evidence of standards of pupil attainments across the secular curriculum is limited. An 1829 report on the "Present State and Efficiency" of the Central Schools of the National Society, however, provides detailed information about the average ages, length of school attendance, and levels of achievement of boys and girls in the schools' classes, to show clear differences in patterns of attendance and standards of achievement between the two sexes. Thus, despite being older than the boys in comparable classes in the boys' school, a consistently shorter average period of school enrolment for girl pupils was linked to lower standards of work in the classes of the girls' school. The 44 girls in class one, for example, had an average age of 12 years and 7 months, and after an average of two years and seven months at the school



had achieved a standard which compared fairly favourably with that of class one boys. The 48 class one pupils in the boys' school, however, had an average age of only ten years and ten months, and while both boys and girls were reading the Bible and were able to write on paper, the boys were working on the rule of 3, bills of parcels and proportion and practice in arithmetic, while the girls were still at a level of compound multiplication. Summary totals of the levels at which boys and girls were working in the two schools show clearly the lower levels of girls' achievements. (table 4) A similar survey of the standards achieved by pupils in attendance at the principal schools associated with the Durham National Society also showed far fewer girls than boys achieving the highest standards of 'Catechism and explanations' in reading and of 'cipherring in rules'. (85)

Table 4Gender Differences in Standards of Achievement in the Central National Schools, 1829

	Boys	Girls
<u>Reading</u>		
Scripture cards	6.6%	14.1%
Book no.2	8.3%	14.6%
Discourse of Our Saviour & above	77.7%	71.2%
<u>Writing</u>		
on slates	49.6%	61%
on paper	50.4%	39%
<u>Ciphering</u>		
rule of 3 & above	3.7%	
compound rules*	20.8%	39%
simple rules	63.2%	46.8%
digits		14.2%

\* Boys were learning all four rules of compound arithmetic, but the girls learned only compound addition and multiplication.

Evidence of sharp differences in the standards of literacy of the two sexes, though including both schooled and unschooled children and men and women of all social ranks, also supports a generally very poor evaluation of girls' 'academic' achievements. National figures for male literacy show an erratic progression for this period, with a decline in literacy between 1795 and 1805 (the take off period for Sunday schooling) to a level below that of 1754

(40 per cent), rising thereafter to a level of around 67 per cent in 1840. Female literacy increased steadily but slowly to reach a level of just above 50 per cent in 1840, with an increased rate of improvement after 1800. On the average, therefore, about half brides and grooms of all social classes could sign their names in 1754 and about 58 per cent in 1840. (86) Progress in the development of literacy was, however, subject to enormous variation over time, place and gender, with differences in the male and female literacy levels for Lancashire pointing up differences in the relative educational experiences of boys and girls in the two regions.

Thus, despite the enormous investment in support of elementary education on the part of the National Society, the picture of an overall improvement in literacy was not maintained in Lancashire. In many of the cotton towns such as Manchester and Preston literacy rates were actually lower in 1831-7 than they had been in the mid eighteenth century, so that, though there had been a very slight overall improvement since the turn of the century, around half to three-quarters of the populations of these towns were still unable to write their own names. (87) The pessimistic conclusions of the Manchester Statistical survey of education in Pendelton that erratic and limited school attendance at best led to

"little or no practical benefit" (88) appear to be borne out by such evidence, in relation to both sexes.

Comparison between average literacy levels for men and women in Suffolk and Norfolk and Lancashire between 1839 to 1845, however, points up some interesting differences between the regions, with an average level of 39 per cent male illiteracy in Lancashire, showing that Lancashire men were actually less illiterate than the men of Norfolk and Suffolk (44 and 46 per cent respectively), (89) despite the superior levels of day school enrolment in the two rural counties.

Less surprisingly, women were more likely to be illiterate than men in all three counties, with 50 per cent of Norfolk women, 52 per cent of Suffolk, and 67 per cent of Lancashire women being unable to sign their names. (90) A superiority of school provision in Norfolk and Suffolk is thus more evident in female literacy levels, with the levels of female illiteracy in Lancashire being considerably worse than those in the other two counties - indeed, being the highest for the whole country. (91)

As Stephens has pointed out, it was the levels of illiteracy among women in the industrial areas that were the crucial ingredient in the well below average levels of literacy that prevailed, with male



illiteracy only slightly higher than the national average. (92) Though fortunate in their access to relatively well paid employment, the women and girls of Lancashire were acutely disadvantaged in their basic educational attainments.

Despite the generally lower levels of literacy levels of women, it cannot be assumed that the attainments of women and girls were necessarily inferior to those of men and boys in respect of literacy. Unfortunately, no evidence is available for male and female levels of literacy within the different parishes of Norfolk and Suffolk for this early period but it seems plausible to suggest superior levels of female literacy over male in the rural districts of each county. This was the case in 1851, and indeed by 1871 levels of female literacy were superior to those of male literacy in every registration district, excepting those of Ipswich and Norwich. (93) Here, the incentive of domestic service as the occupational future of girls, coupled with the barriers that existed to limit the schooling of boys, seem to have had the effect of supporting the attainments of girls, at least as far as the acquisition of very basic literacy skills.

In the context of individual experience, the potential impact of the acquisition of basic literacy skills is plain, with even the limited education

provided in a Sunday school opening doors to new experiences and, perhaps, also expanded opportunities. Laqueur has calculated the levels of competence attained by pupils leaving Stockport Sunday school to show that educational achievements could be substantial when measured against starting points. Though representing only a minute fraction of the population, in individual terms the achievements of the 359 students (sex unspecified) leaving the school able to read fluently, to write and to do accounts in 1820 were considerable. (94) The excitement and pride that came with such achievements are brought vividly to life in the words of Adam Rushton, the son of a poor agricultural labourer, who attended Sunday school in the 1820s or 30s.

I worked hard and strove eagerly to get into one of these (writing classes),... And then came the glorious lines and straight strokes, pothooks and ladles... Then, more exhilarating still, came forth words, and sentences, and even my own name, written in large strong strokes of my quill pen. No engineer, architect, inventor, discoverer, or commander could have felt more exquisite pleasure in their moments of conquest and triumph, than was experienced by me. (95)

How many such triumphs were experienced by girls and women we do not know, but the available evidence suggests that they were few. Even laying aside

personal viewpoints it is difficult to imagine any 'exquisite pleasure' arising from the hemming and darning that could take so prominent a place in the learning opportunities available to girls. And though doubtless the ability to read opened doors to pleasure and progress to many girls - Mary Smith is a case in point - such doors remained firmly closed for all too many girls, especially in Lancashire. The two Lancashire girls interviewed by the Manchester Statistical Society probably described educational experiences that were all too familiar to girls of this class. At the private school one attended, "the mistress used to set the scholars agate (sic) o' peeling potatoes and fetching water 'stead of setting them to read", and the other explained, "I never went to schoo' so mitch as to keep me i' larning - cannot tell how it wur - think it was neglect". (96)

Despite her relatively good fortune in being able to attend day school, Mary Smith's memories of her educational experiences were not happy ones, with her evaluation of the impact of schooling as serving only to cripple and cramp the souls of Englishwomen "as the Chinese women's feet by their shoes" (97) highlighting the cultural messages conveyed by girls' schooling and the limitations imposed by girls' lack of attainments.

Mary Anne Hearne also voiced her frustration at the covert cultural messages embedded in the Sunday school literature of the period, which implicitly informed her that ambition was misplaced in girls. In one of these magazines, she wrote,

was a series of articles on men who had been poor boys, and risen to be rich and great. Every month I hoped to find the story of some poor, ignorant girl who beginning life as handicapped as I, had yet been able by her own efforts and the blessings of God upon them to live a life of usefulness, if not of greatness. But I believe there was not a woman in the whole series.

Like those of Mary Smith, Mary Anne's everyday experiences of life at home were directed against educational ambition and even limited academic accomplishment. "Most lessons came from our parents, chiefly, of course, our mother" she recalled, "she taught us to sweep and clean, sew and knit ... all the household arts". Like Mary Smith's mother also, Mrs. Hearne was rather disapproving of her daughter's love of reading,

Dear mother! She did not like me always having a book in my hand or pocket, and would have been better pleased if I had been equally fond of the brush or the needle. (98)



If the evidence of these two women is to be believed - and there is much to support it (99) - there was very little, if anything, to encourage a pro-educational cultural climate within the working-class community for, or on the part of, women and girls. The importance of domestic service as the occupational destination of girls from rural districts in particular may have been an incentive to their attendance at school and to limited attainments, but, beyond the expressed views of a very few unusual men amongst the more radical members of the working-class, there was nothing except personal ambition to counteract the taken for granted, all pervading notion that women's responsibility for the home and family denied any need for anything more than a very basic and domestically oriented schooling at best. As one woman commented bitterly in a letter to the Pioneer in 1833,

The education of the females of the lower classes, in many cases does not extend even so far as a knowledge of their letters, ... in the agregate (sic) to sew and read (and that but very indifferently) is the sum of their acquirements. Yet these females are to be the bosom friends of the most useful portion of our population. (100)

Yet to end on a slightly more positive note, let us

be reminded that an absence of schooling did not necessarily condemn girls and women to a life of total ignorance, and if the anonymous factory girl who was taught to read by a friend and then "bought up histories and books as was nice reading" (101) was denied access to the knowledge and skills that were so valued by many working-class men, at least she was spared the tedium of the needlework and the cultural messages conveyed by formal schooling that would have directed her away from her (relatively) well paid and independent job in the factory into domestic service.

### Conclusions

The answers to two basic questions have been pursued through this chapter; firstly, what were girls taught? and secondly, what did they learn? The short answer to both questions is not very much. In the schools, the curriculum available to girls of this social group offered several variations. The 'ideal' curriculum, as provided in the public day schools and the Sunday schools of the early part of the century, offered to children of both sexes a basic diet of reading and religion, with a not so hidden curriculum of school rules and routines designed to foster the attitudes and behaviours appropriate to the duties of the lower orders. Beyond the expression of moral and

Christian precepts which sought to inculcate the relative duties of husbands and wives, however, there was little overtly to differentiate the content of a curriculum thought<sup>to</sup> be appropriate for boys and that thought to be suitable for girls.

The curricula of the charity and industrial schools, were, however, gender specific, with the inclusion of vocationally orientated 'industrial work' being directed towards the training of girls to be good domestic servants and eventually, it may be assumed, to be 'good' wives and mothers, as defined by their social superiors. The third variety of curriculum was one that evolved through practice, taking the 'best' elements of existing curricula to teach girls a basic curriculum of reading, religion and needlework. As it evolved, therefore, the 'ideal' curriculum in the provided schools for girls became increasingly gender-specific, with pragmatism meeting ideology in defining basic literacy skills, religion and needlework as the 'core' curriculum for working-class girls.

The curricula of the private schools was very similar. Though occasionally including some rudimentary teaching of history, geography and grammar, and perhaps some arithmetic, the schools provided the basic curriculum that parents wanted for their daughters; that is, reading, writing and

needlework. Any extension of curriculum provision beyond this seems to have consisted of 'fancy' needlework, crochet and knitting, with, in the view of Mary Smith, the attainment of skills in this area being seen as far more important than academic achievement for girls. The teaching of 'morals' apart, the nature of working-class demand, as represented in the curriculum provision in the private schools, thus matched the ideals of provision as defined by the providers of public schooling, in a shared understanding of what was really useful knowledge for girls.

Notwithstanding the motivation that underlay such developments, the consequence was a widening division between the education provided in the best schools for boys and that provided in the best schools for girls, with gender differentiated models of curricula being adopted for general recommendation by both the education Societies. And while the girls were busy sewing, the boys were busy learning, with more time available to them for the acquisition of basic skills and even, in the very best schools, time being made available for the teaching and learning of a range of academic subjects.

Factors of resourcing, however, also prescribed curriculum content and organisation with, in many schools, insufficient money to support the



establishment of separate schools or classes for the two sexes or the employment of a sewing mistress to teach needlework to the girls. In what may even have been the majority of schools within the two regions, therefore, boys and girls were taught the same basic - and very limited - curriculum.

To assess what girls learned from their schooling is more difficult than to describe what was probably taught in the schools. Evidence of lower levels of literacy amongst women in general, and of lower standards of achievement on the part of girls in a few schools, does suggest that their 'academic' learning was relatively limited, though whether this was a factor of non-attendance, erratic attendance or limited curriculum provision arising from a preoccupation with needlework is impossible to tell. It may also have been that lower standards of achievement were indicative of the success of the schools in inculcating the 'domestic' orientation and patriarchal assumptions embedded in the hidden curriculum.

We simply do not know to what extent the expressed reform and control purposes of provided education were achieved; whether there was a significant increase in the numbers of working people who read their Bibles and adopted the moral precepts of the Anglican Scriptures, (102) whether standards of

domestic comfort improved in working-class homes or even whether the quality of domestic servants improved. Continuing, even expanding employment of married women in the factories and fields cannot be taken as evidence of the schools' failure to instil a proper appreciation of gender roles and behaviours for, as will be seen in chapter 6, relatively few families could afford to forego the earnings of wives. Even with evidence of changes in the ways of life of working-class women, the impact of the schools on behaviours would be impossible to evaluate. Whether couched in terms of a reformist or a radical rationale, whether evolving in response to consumer demand or pragmatic factors of resourcing, whether 'ideal' or not, curriculum provision for girls was compatible with the gender-based divisions of labour and attitudes and values of the working-class family and community. The operation of gender divisions of labour may have had different consequences in terms of access to schooling, girls may even have had some advantage over boys or have experienced a formal equality in terms of overt curriculum provision. The fact remains, however, that the purposes and the 'ideal' practices of schooling were defined in gender-specific terms - with major implications for the 'progress' of elementary education.

Richard Johnson has described the 1820s as being a "very significant educational decade" and "a very formative moment in the history of radical educational ideologies of both progressive bourgeoisie and insurgent working-class" , (103) with the initial imperatives towards the establishment of schools for the poor now shading into an evaluation of the effectiveness of schooling policies and practices. The emergence of the liberal middle-class critique of monitorial pedagogy, the development of the infant school movement, of new forms of educational enterprise directed at adult male education are all indicative of new lines of thinking, marking both a dissatisfaction with existing educational forms and practices and their relative failure to impose models of desirable behaviour on the working population of the industrial districts in particular. More radical initiatives were to be developed in relation to the formal education of girls, with the imposition of compulsory schooling for factory children being one strategy in continuing attempts to educate girls towards an active awareness of their properly feminine roles as wives and mothers. But the parameters of what girls should be taught were already established in the 1820, with 'new lines of thinking' being directed more towards the implementation of the domestic

curriculum rather than any radical re-appraisal of the policies and practices of girls' education. The basic principle was established; boys and girls were different, their roles in society were different, and they were, therefore, to be taught different things in different ways.



## Notes

1. As Laqueur has said, "literacy was the sine qua non of religious life". Laqueur, op.cit., p.9.
2. Minute book of the Bath National Sunday school and school of industry, February 1806, p.5.
3. See, for example, the rules of the Spicer St. Lancasterian school in Spitalfield. Mc.Cann, P.op.cit., in Mc.Cann, P. (Ed.), op.cit., p.12.
4. Laqueur, op.cit., p.55.
5. Madoc-Jones, op.cit., pp.61-2.
6. Quoted by Johnson, 'Notes', p.47.
7. Pamphlet published by the Norfolk and Norwich National Society, included in the Society Minute Book, 28/10/1812.
8. The model of teacher training developed by the two societies was one where prospective or practising teachers attended the normal school of the central or local branch of the society and worked their way through the classes. This served two purposes; the teacher would learn the content of lessons and the day to day organisation of the monitorial system.  
The expense involved in training a teacher or employing a 'qualified' one, could be prohibitive, and few schools in rural Norfolk or Suffolk could afford such luxuries. It became standard practice, therefore, for a trained 'advisory' teacher to visit a school and to train the teacher and the pupils, but again, the money was not always forthcoming for this.
9. Goldstrom, J.M., 'The Content of Education and the Socialisation of the Working-Class Child 1830-1860', in Mcann, P. (Ed.), op.cit., pp.94-9.
10. Ibid, p.98.
11. Quoted by M.Dick, op.cit., p.33.
12. P.P. 1834, IX, p.72.
13. Quoted by Laqueur, op.cit., p.215.

14. Rules of the Jubilee School for Girls, Manchester, 1810, in Reports of the Committee 1856-1870, pp.3, 13.
15. Many were boarding schools, with a time-table that could occupy the girls from 6 am. to 8 pm. every day of the week. This was the case at the Jubilee School. Ibid, p.22.
16. Vanes, J., Apparalled in Red: The History of the Red Maids' School, Bristol, 1984, pp.42, 65.
17. P.P. 1816, IV.4, p.282.
18. Minute Book, St. Leonard's Girls' School, 5/5/1813.
19. It is resonable to assume that the rules assumed an adherence to gender divisions of labour and patriarchal norms, though this was not made explicit.
20. Minute book of St. Leonard's School, entries for 7/7/1792, 5/8/1793, 7/8/1812.
21. Blue Coat School Ladies' Committee Minute Book, entries for June and Novemeber, 1820.
22. Other suitable employments were generally those associated with needlework trades. The Red Maids' school mistree, for example, was required to vet prospective employers. Vanes, ibid, p.86.
23. Ibid, p.87.
24. Ibid, p.70.
25. Ibid, p.71.
26. Johnson, op.cit, p.45.
27. Annual report of the National Society, 1832, p.119.
28. Annual Report of the British Society, 1815, p.60.
29. William Davis, organiser of Gower's Walk School, Whitechapel, P.P., 1834, X, p.211.
30. Annual Report of the National Society, 1817, p.193.
31. Annual Report of the National Society, 1818, p.193.

32. Annual Report of the British Society, 1827, footnote to p.57.
33. Annual Report of the National Society, 1818, p.14. The appointment of a sewing mistress to the 'working department' of the girls' school was said to have improved attendance and to have been well received by parents. Annual Report of the Society, 1820, p.10.
34. Annual Report of the National Society, 1833, p.53.
35. Ibid.
36. Many schools advertised for needlework for the girls, on "very moderate terms". Annual Reports of Societies in Union with the National Society, Birmingham, 1818, p.7.
37. Annual Report of the National Society, 1832, p.119.
38. Annual Report of the National Society, 1833, p.53.
39. Reports relating to the Girls' School (Weymouth House School, Bath), 1836, p.2.
40. P.P. 1845, XXXV, p.31-2 (Allen); P.P. 1847, XLV, p.185-8 (Watkins); P.P. 1852-3, LXXX, p.297 (Mitchell).
41. P.P. 1847, XLV, p.289.
42. Commenting on the preponderance of female teachers in private schools teaching mixed classes, the Education Committee of Finsbury remarked,  
     The circumstances of so large a proportion of boys being under female superintendence ... is worthy of remark because the opinion of the promoters of charitable education ... is much in favour of employing male teachers in preference to females, whenever circumstances will admit of it.  
     Report of the Education Committee of Finsbury, Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, vol.6, 1843, p.32.
43. Laqueur, op.cit., p.151.
44. Ibid, pp.150-1.

45. Gardner, op.cit., p.161.
46. Laqueur, op.cit., p.132.
47. Wigram, J.C., Practical Hints, 1833, quoted in ibid.
48. In Salford, for example, the time given to instruction in a Sunday school varied from less than three hours to five or more. Report of the Manchester Statistical Society (hereafter called M.S.S.) on Education in Salford, 1836, table 5, p.39.
49. History or geography were taught in five evening classes in Salford. Ibid, p.35. Only a minority of the Lancashire schools surveyed by the Manchester Statistical Society, however, taught writing and arithmetic. M.S.S., Liverpool, 1835-6, summary table, p.vii.
50. Laqueur, op.cit., pp.103-4.
51. Ibid, p.102. Some rural Sunday schools may have been teaching writing by 1843, however. Ibid, p.105.
52. Though Anglican Sunday schools were about three times more plentiful in Suffolk, around half the children on the books of Ipswich Sunday schools at mid-century were enrolled at Dissenting schools. This suggests that these schools may have offered a wider secular curriculum at this point. P.P. 1852-3, XC, pp.106-110.
53. P.P. 1837-8, VII, p.589.
54. M.S.S., Rutland, 1839, p.8.
55. See, for example, Laqueur's description of Sunday schools in the life of the individual and the community. Laqueur, op.cit., pp.169-179.
56. Ibid, pp.193, 239. Note 59 chapter 4.
57. M.S.S., Manchester, 1835, p.22.
58. P.P. 1837-8, VII, p.122. Though see the description of Wilderspin's Infant school in Spitalfields in Mc.Cann, op.cit., p.23.
59. M.S.S., Pendleton, quoted by Gardner, op.cit., p.163.



60. Evidence to the 1837 Select Committee, quoted in ibid.
61. Stephens, W.B., Adult Education and Society in an Industrial Town: Warrington 1800-1900, Exeter, 1980, p.18.
62. Gardner, op.cit., p.173.
63. Stephens, 'Education', p.352.
64. M.S.S., Birmingham, 1840, p.35.
65. State of Agricultural Labourers in Northumberland, Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, vol.1, 1838, p.403.
66. The Autobiography of Mary Smith, Schoolmistress and Nonconformist: A Fragment of a Life, London, 1892, p.24. She was at school in the 1820s.
67. Ibid, pp.17, 24, 30.
68. Ibid.
69. M.S.S., Manchester, 1835, p.10.
70. M.S.S., Salford, 1836, p.11.
71. M.S.S., Rutland, 1839, p.9.
72. An investigation of education in Finsbury in 1843 inquired into the motives of female teachers in entering the profession to investigate reasons for "the immense preponderance of Female teachers" in the private schools. Of 304 teachers questioned, 38 said they had become teachers through choice and 264 said "they adopted it for a maintenance". Report of the Education Committee of Finsbury, op.cit., p.32.  
In Birmingham, for example, the average pupil/teacher ratio in the private schools was 39:1 for boys, 20:4 for girls. Report of the Birmingham Statistical Society, Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, vol.3, 1840, p.33.
73. Ibid.
74. Frith, S. 'Socialisation and Rational Schooling: elementary education in Leeds before 1870', in Mc.Cann, p., (Ed.), op.cit., pp.76-7.
75. Ibid.

76. Annual Report of the British Society, 1834, p.8.
77. 7.5 per cent of girls but only 1 per cent of boys were dismissed for these reasons. The majority returned within 12 months, but of the 54 girl returners, three returned after an interval of more than four months. Madoc-Jones, B., 'Patterns of Attendance and their Social Significance in Mitcham National School 1830-1839.' in Mc.Cann, P. (Ed.), op.cit., pp.47, 52-3.  
The Report of the Birmingham Statistical Society suggested a very similar pattern of attendance.  
the attendance is very fluctuating, ..., among boys who have arrived at an age to obtain some situation, and with girls who are enabled to assist in nursing and household work. The former, when out of a situation, and the latter, when not required at home, may, perhaps, be again sent to school. B.S.S., op.cit., p.35-6.
78. Madoc-Jones, op.cit., pp.45-50.
79. Minute Book of St. Leonard's Charity School, 6/9/1813, 7/9/1818.
80. Annual Report of the National Society, 1821, p.10.
81. A central school for girls was established in Norwich in 1824, 12 years after the establishment of the boys' central school. Minutes of the Norfolk and Norwich Society, April, 1824. The Suffolk National Society trained teachers in the central schools at Ipswich and Bury before 1839. After the amalgamation of the Norfolk and Suffolk societies in 1839, teachers were trained in Norwich, with the exception of teachers for country schools who continued to be trained in the local central schools. Annual Reports of the Suffolk Society for the Education of the Poor, 1812-1839.
82. Glyde, op.cit., p.229.
83. Ibid, p.215.
84. Stephens, op.cit., p.78.
85. Author's calculations. Annual Reports of the National Society, 1829, p.25; 1831, p.30.
86. Stephens, op.cit., p.5.

87. illiteracy levels in nine industrial towns were as follows:

	1799-1804	1831-7
Blackburn	69	68
Bolton	70	67
Burnley	72	?
Bury	62	72
Clitheroe	62	?
Chorley	64	56
Deane	69	72
Ecclestone	49	60
Manchester	62	58
Preston	58	53
<u>Ibid</u> , p.7.		

88. M.S.S., Pendleton, 1839, p.10.
89. Stephens, op.cit., pp.322-323.
90. Ibid.
91. Monmouthshire, with its extremely poor provision, and Bedfordshire, with high employment of girls in domestic lace making, had levels of female illiteracy of 65% and 64% respectively. Ibid.
92. Ibid, p.94.
93. Ibid, pp.94, 332.
94. Laqueur, op.cit., p.121.
95. Ibid, p.154.
96. M.S.S., Pendleton, p.4-5.
97. Mary Smith, op.cit, p.32.
98. Quoted by Gorman, D., The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal, London, 1982, pp.143-6.
99. See the letters to the radical press and evidence of women's desire for Sunday schooling in chapter 4.
100. Taylor, op.cit., p.232.
101. M.S.S., Pendleton, p.16.
102. Though see evidence of hostility against Anglicanism and support for religious dissent in Norfolk and Suffolk after the later 1830s in chapter 6.

103. Johnson, 'Notes', p.46.



Reformism and Respectability: the later 1830s to 1870

The developments in labour history in the period from the later 1830s have attracted much attention from historians concerned to explore the causes and consequences of the mass political movement of Chartism through the 1840s, (1) the mellowing of class relations evident from the 1850s, and the historical changes and continuities contained therein. (2) As Kirk has summed up, "most post 1850 unions, ..., came to terms with the new order of industrial capitalism and sought to come to agreement with employers as to 'the rules of the game' far more readily and widely than in earlier decades". (3) While not being concerned directly with issues of reformism as such, this chapter pursues similar themes of continuities and discontinuities in relationships between workers and employers, with a specific focus on the development of what has been called 'a coincidence of interests' between philanthropy, the state and the male working classes in relation to the socio-economic roles of working-class women in the cotton textile districts. (4) Issues of discontinuity are explored through discussion of the extent to which this apparent consensus can be said to have penetrated the realities of working-class life; whether the 'domestic ideology' and its associated

ideal of the male breadwinner and the domestic wife and mother had any validity beyond the expressed values of members of the middle classes and the aspirations of more 'aristocratic' sections of the working classes.(5) These questions are also extended to exploration of social relations in the rural areas of Norfolk and Suffolk, where the very different experiences of working people throw further light on the complex inter-relationships between issues of gender and those of class-cultural control towards the achievement of consensus across social, occupational and gender divisions. Rather than reformism, the keynotes of social and economic relations between the labourers and their employers were those of repression and protest, with a failure to achieve any sort of cross-class consensus or 'mellowing' of class relations.

The chronology of the chapter also echoes the broad shifts in labour relations identified by historians, with the later 1830s and 1840s being identified as a period of continuing conflict within the industrial districts, but with the experiences of different occupational groups being used to highlight a more protracted process of accommodation between employers and employees in the rural areas of the East of England. While, as will be argued, the re-establishment of equilibrium between family and

community values and the organisation of factory labour supported a stability in social relations from the 1850s in the North, class hostility remained marked throughout the period in Suffolk and Norfolk. Some improvement in economic conditions in the agricultural communities took place in the latter part of the period, and these were accompanied by adjustments to family roles and gender divisions of labour, but, as will be shown, the causes and the chronology of such changes differed sharply from those taking place in the textile regions of Lancashire.

As before, the discussion begins with changes in the organisation of labour in the cotton textile industry to identify pressures on occupational and social roles and subsequent adjustments.

#### **Reformism and Respectability in the Cotton Districts of Lancashire.**

Despite the enormous changes in the organisation of textile production in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, it was not until this later period, when weaving became predominantly a factory occupation, (6) that the production of cotton textiles can be said to have been fully mechanised. (7) One effect of this development was to bring more adult

men into the mills, though, in spite of renewed agitation against their factory employment and the imposition of limits on their work in the 1840s, female workers remained numerically dominant. Indeed, there was a proportional increase in the numbers of women working in the cotton mills, from a total of around 189,000 in 1850, to 269,000 in 1861, and to 292,000 in 1874.(8)

There was also, as the 1833 Commissioners had anticipated fearfully, a gradual increase in the proportion of married women and widows working in the cotton factories as child labour declined in consequence of the Acts of 1833 and 1844.(9) The proportion of adult women over the age of 20 in the factories grew from around 41 per cent of female labour in 1835, to 42 per cent in 1841, rising sharply thereafter to 57.4 per cent in 1851. Hewitt estimated, and her figures were necessarily crude estimates, that this growth in the proportion of adult women employed was paralleled by an increase in the proportion of married women and widows from around 27 per cent of total female labour in cotton in 1847 to around a third of female labour in 1873.(10)

These indications of an increase in the factory employment of married women illustrate a curious dichotomy in the situation that developed with, on



the one hand, an apparent agreement between workers, the state and paternalists such as Lord Ashley that the factory employment of women, particularly of married women, was undesirable, and, on the other hand, an apparent acceptance of their continuing, and increasing, presence in the factories. As we have seen in chapter 2, the expectation that women of all ages and marital status would engage in productive labour and contribute to family incomes was taken for granted amongst working people in the early nineteenth century. Associations of working men had fought for the occupational segregation of women (and of other cheap, unskilled competition) but there was no suggestion that women should not engage in paid labour. In the 1840s, however, trade unionists and short-time supporters began increasingly to argue that all females, married and single, should be excluded from the factories and the mines to concentrate their efforts on 'domestic' occupations, more in keeping with their 'natural' feminine roles. Thus, for example, a deputation from the West Riding to Sir Robert Peel on 'the Ten Hours Factory Question' in 1842, argued at length that the factory employment of women was unacceptable, voicing arguments that appear to demonstrate considerable affinity with the views of Gaskell, Kay-Shuttleworth

and others in the outcry against factory 'evils' in the 1830s. The deputation urged,

the gradual withdrawal of all females from factories ... The females employed in factories ... get little if any education worthy the name previous to entering the mills, and as soon as they enter them ... are surrounded by influences of the most vitiating and debasing nature. They grow up in total ignorance of all the true duties of woman. Home, its cares, and its employments is woman's true sphere; but these poor things are totally unfitted for attending to the one, or participating in the other. They neither learn, ..., to make a shirt, darn a stocking, cook a dinner or clean a house. In short, in both mind and manners, they are altogether unfitted for the occupancy of a domestic position, as it is evidenced by the fact, that the wealthy and middle classes very rarely engage any of this class as servants. Yet those who are thus considered unfit even to fill the office of menial to the rich, are the only parties among whom, ordinarily, the male factory labourer has a chance of obtaining a wife. They are married early. Many are mothers before they are twenty. Thriftlessness and waste, even of their small incomes, and consequent domestic discomfort and unhappiness, generally succeed. Through these means is engendered a vast amount of immorality and misery; and while such are its results as respects

private life, the operation of the system is no less injurious in a national point of view. It throws the burden of supporting the family on the wife and the children and compels the adult male, upon whose shoulders the duty ought rightfully to fall, to be reluctantly idle. It is an inversion of the order of nature and of Providence - a return to a state of barbarism, in which the woman does the work, while the man looks idly on. The consequence of throwing loose such a mass of partially informed men in such circumstances, cannot fail to be fraught with danger to the state. Disaffection and discontent must be engendered among parties so situated. (11)

This has been quoted at length to illustrate the nature of the arguments put forward - with the veiled and implicit threat of social disorder should the women of the factory districts, properly educated in their duties as wives and mothers, not be placed firmly in their 'natural' sphere of the home. The 'Ten Hours Advocate', the short-time committees' official publication, expressed the arguments, and the eventual goals, more succinctly and directly,

it is needless for us to say, that all attempts to improve the moral and physical condition of female factory workers will be abortive, unless their hours are materially reduced. Indeed, ... married females would be much better occupied in performing the

domestic duties of the household, than following the never-tiring motion of machinery. We therefore hope the day is not distant, when the husband will be able to provide for his wife and family, without sending the former to endure the drudgery of a cotton mill. (12)

This shift in attitudes was not abrupt, and as we have seen in the remarks of Francis Place quoted earlier, its beginnings were discernible in the mid 1830s. Neither do these arguments represent a complete change in attitudes but rather a redefinition of the 'ideal' roles of working-class women through a reinforcement of their traditional responsibilities for child care and domestic concerns, with an extension and rigidification of gender divisions of labour. Nor were they a whole-sale adoption of bourgeois values, though in articulating their demands in this way the arguments of the short-time supporters were more likely to receive a sympathetic reception from many members of the middle and upper classes. (13)

Lord Ashley was also an ardent advocate of the desirability of excluding women from the factories and though his understanding of the numbers of wives and mothers so employed was exaggerated, his position as the Chairman of the Select Committee appointed to investigate the operation of the 1833 Act is likely



to have given additional credence to his claims. Forced to support their husbands and families by their work, married women were, he stated, neglecting their household duties to spend time drinking, smoking and using "disgusting language". (14) Furthermore, he claimed,

the evil is spreading rapidly and extensively - desolating like a torrent the peace, the economy and the virtue of the mighty masses of the manufacturing districts. Domestic life and domestic discipline must soon be at an end; (15)

Many similar claims were made in the early 1840s, claims which largely repeated those made in the 1830s, but in contrast to the polemic of the earlier period condemnation of the evils of the system were extended to include calls for the provision of protective legislation limiting the employment of adult female labour. This represented a support for legislative interference in the 'natural' laws of supply and demand, moreover, that was sufficient to overcome laissez-faire principles of non-interference in relations between employers and adult workers, and the opposition of the majority of industrialists (16) to achieve statutory regulation of women's hours of work in the 1844 Factory Act. Though it did not meet fully the wishes of the short-time committees, the

Act extended the limits on child labour, (8 to 13 year olds became 'half-timers' alternating between factory work and compulsory schooling), and fixed the hours of young persons (13 to 18 year olds) and of women to twelve per day between the hours of 5.30 am and 8.30 pm. Subsequent legislation in 1847 restricted these hours further to ten per day.(17)

Immediate support for the legislation of 1844 and 1847 was prompted by a variety of motives.(18) Of more significance, however, were the social theories that found expression in the formulation and operation of the legislation. As leader of the short-time cause in Parliament before his resignation in 1846, for example, Lord Ashley personified the enlightened humanitarianism of aristocratic paternalism, inspired by the spiritual and moral values of Christian Evangelicalism, while Leonard Horner, the man responsible for the operation of legislation in his capacity as Factory Inspector, personified the 'professional' middle-class values inspired by the secular morality of Benthamite Utilitarianism.(19) The point is not made to dwell on the origins of Victorian social reform (20), but to underline the fact that the extension of protective legislation to adult women was neither inevitable, nor universally perceived as desirable. Manufacturers' opposition to legislative

'interference' may well have been prompted by purely economic motives but there were many who recognised the enormous benefits offered to women, and to contemporary society, by their employment in the factories. The debate did not achieve consensus and there were those who recognised the benefits offered by the factory system in raising the position of women in society. In his report on the hand-loom weavers in 1840, Hickson argued,

The great drawback to female happiness, among the middle and working classes, is, their complete dependence and almost helplessness in securing the means of subsistence. The want of other employment than the needle cheapens their labour ..., until, it is almost valueless. In Lancashire, profitable employment for females is abundant ... A young woman, prudent and careful, ... may, by factory employment, save £100 as a wedding portion. I believe it to be to the interest of the community that every young woman should have this in her power. She is not then driven into an early marriage by the necessity of seeking a home; and the consciousness of independence in being able to earn her own living, is favourable to the development of her best moral energies. It is a great error in our view of social economy to suppose that the interests of either sex requires that the other should be restricted in the right of acquiring or

holding property. (21)

And if few would have gone so far as to define female factory labour as beneficial, there were many who recognised the often essential nature of their earnings. Even Dr. Mitchell, a man who saw the low wages available to women as a far-sighted and benevolent process of 'nature', hesitated to condemn women's work on the pit-banks of the collieries, recognising that it was a lesser evil than destitution. As he said in 1842,

when we consider how many employments men have engrossed to themselves, and how few ways there are for women to gain their living, we must be cautious not to attempt to narrow what is already so limited. (22)

But such views were increasingly out of step with general opinion, particularly middle-class opinion, which by the 1840s was very much influenced by Evangelical principles. Halevy described English society in the early nineteenth century as being "impregnated with Evangelical opinion" (23) and the views on the social and spiritual roles of women developed within Evangelicalism provided a crucial influence on judgements as to the acceptability of factory work for them. In her discussion of the early formation of Victorian domestic ideologies, Catherine Hall has described how Evangelical aims - "the



attempt to transform national morality" - contributed to a re-emphasis on the primary roles of women as wives and mothers. (24) Evangelical views emphasised and extended 'natural' divisions between the sexes, with the feminine character and physique being seen as naturally more delicate and fragile, naturally more suited to the peaceful seclusion of the domestic environment and, therefore, naturally requiring the protection of men. "Men, on the contrary, are formed for the more public exhibition on the great theatre of human life" wrote Hannah More, (25) with the world of work, the public sphere, being the natural domain for their stronger capabilities. Essentially, Evangelicalism assumed marriage and motherhood as the central purpose of women's lives with their duties - and the concept of duty was central to Evangelical thinking - being the care, most particularly the moral care, of husband, children, relatives and friends. Women were, in the words of Wilberforce, "the medium of our intercourse with the heavenly world, the faithful repositories of the religious principles, for the benefit both of the present and the rising generation". (26) Small wonder then that stories of the immoralities of the factory girl and of the apparent destruction of family life in the industrial districts were received with shocked outrage.

In their concern about the 'condition of England' as exposed in the inquiries of the 1830s and 1840s, the Evangelicals found common ground for a working alliance with the Benthamite Utilitarians. Disparate though their philosophical beliefs were, both groups viewed evidence of political sedition and industrial unrest amongst the working classes with profound disquiet, both saw the extension of 'middle-class' values as a means of alleviating social ills, (27) and both saw the working-class woman as having a crucial role to play in achieving the desired state of social well-being and harmony. In the movement for factory reform in the 1840s, therefore, can be seen the binding of the moral and spiritual values of Evangelicalism with the policies and practices of Utilitarianism. (28) These informed perceptions of what had been but was no longer tolerable, (29) provided the methodology of 'professional' investigators and administrators, (30) and the rationale for reform. The greatest happiness of the greatest number, and moral and spiritual regeneration was to be achieved by the twin solutions of restoring a proper appreciation of the prime roles of women amongst the working-classes and educating working people towards more civilised and 'intelligent' values and behaviours. If the practicalities of Utilitarianism denied the complete ban on the factory

work of women that the Evangelicals would have wished, restrictions on their hours of work would confer the protection their 'fragility' demanded and allowed them more time to devote to home and family; while the ultimate goal, that of their withdrawal from the factories would gradually be achieved by educating girls towards a proper understanding of their duties as wives and mothers. (31)

Given the conditions of life and work in the industrial regions in this period, it is not surprising to find that many women welcomed the restrictions imposed on their hours of work.(32) Gender divisions of labour did give women prime responsibility for household labour and child care and there were many hours of work in the day in addition to the twelve spent at the factory. (33) Foster's evidence of Oldham women aged between 25 and 34, the age-group supplying the greatest share of millworkers, experiencing treble the national death rate from tuberculosis ("the characteristic disease of overwork") is particularly telling of the strains imposed by the 'double burden' of factory women. (34)

But though they may have been "the slaves of Lancashire society", as a contemporary observer described, (35) shorter hours at the mill represented a luxury that not all married women could afford. Of the 1,133 workers (male and female) interviewed by

Horner, all of whom had lost money through short-time working, the key factor determining their preferences as to hours of work was their level of income. And as this investigation showed, with lower wages than men, women actually preferred longer hours of work, unless they were fortunate enough to have husbands earning reasonable wages. It was the men, rather than the women who preferred shorter hours. (36)

There were in fact many ambivalent and apparently contradictory positions and attitudes regarding the social and occupational roles of working-class women in the 1840s, stemming from a whole variety of factors beyond immediate issues of family economics and factory profitability, important as these were. Nor were these attitudes static and unchanging. Simply to argue that there was "a coincidence of interests" between philanthropy, the capitalist state and the male working-class as represented by the Trade Union movement and Chartism which co-operated to reduce female and child labour (37) fails to address the subtleties and complexities of the interconnections within and between different groups, and shifts and adjustments over time and place. Perhaps a more serious omission from the historical debate, however, has been the failure to explore reasons for the absence of any continuing furore in the 1850s and 1860s against the factory employment of



women; a failure that is, to explore the connections, rather than the disjunctions, between the ideals of female domesticity and the realities of their continuing employment.(38) And in exploring some of the complexities of these inter-connections, bridges can also be built to connect apparently irreconcilable differences and explain their mutual accommodation in the circumstances of working-class life after the 1840s.

Hartmann's suggestion, that working men expressed support for domestic ideologies because of a concern to retain the services of their wife at home, may have some substance.(39) By mid century the factory was recognised to have come to stay, (40) and it seems plausible to suggest that, in the face of practical difficulties caused by the geographical separation of home and employment, workers of both sexes pragmatically accepted that some of these could be resolved by an extension of gender divisions of labour. (40)

Support for the ideals of the male breadwinner wage and the wife at home can also be seen as a logical extension of the classic exclusionist strategies employed in the early craft guilds and later worker associations to safeguard their own skills and status against the encroachments of the unskilled. Where women represented a direct threat to the male

workforce it was but a short step from strategies of exclusion within employment (occupational segregation by gender) to exclusion from employment altogether, particularly when such a strategy could be supported by arguments of unimpeachable morality.

For the spinners, for example, the later 1830s and the early 1840s was a period of intense industrial conflict with their employers, where the employment of women threatened lower wages, loss of authority and status, and unemployment. Cost-cutting strategies prompted by depressed trade and long-standing employer hostility towards "this more refractory class of their workmen" (41) led to the use of cheaper female labour on short mules. By the later 1830s, increased use of the long and double mules had minimised this particular threat, but their lower labour requirements had created a glut of male labour with a substantial fall in the wages of fine and coarse spinners.(42) Workers also faced the even greater threat presented by increasing use of the self-acting mule which, or so the manufacturers claimed, could be readily operated by cheap, unskilled, and docile female workers.(43) Not surprisingly, therefore, the spinners were in the forefront of the campaign to exclude women from the factories or at least to restrict their employment to designated areas of 'women's work'.

As leaders of many of the Lancashire short-time committees, the spinners were also motivated by wider considerations beyond the specific and direct threat posed by the actual employment of women. A genuine concern for the welfare of child workers probably motivated support for an extension of the Factory Acts (44) and the desired extension of time limits to include women was presented, and probably genuinely felt, as a 'protective' measure. But the campaign for short-time was a movement to improve conditions of employment for all workers, including male workers, and as such, was an expression of an alternative theory of the economics of factory production against the political economy of the manufacturers - a theory which put forward strong arguments against the employment of women. Very simply, workers believed that the amount of work available was limited and that internal competition between manufacturers caused over-production, declining profits and lower wage levels. Regulation of hours of work would, therefore, take the edge of this damaging competition, share out work more equitably, and help to smooth out the slumps and booms that led to rushes of work interspersed with periods of under- and unemployment. "If the hours of work were regulated", argued a witness to the 1831-2 Select Committee, "it would in some measure destroy undue competition for

labour and the wages would be more likely to rise than to fall".(45) As the primary wage-earner of a family, a male worker, as a husband and father, had an a priori right to work that was greater than that of the female worker, a 'right' that was reinforced, in terms of family economics, by the generally higher wage he received. The woman worker, particularly the married woman worker, not only had less 'right' to work, she was a cause (as well as a consequence) of working-class poverty. Her lower wages directly undercut male wages, her presence in the labour market flooded the labour supply and reduced wage rates, and she took work away from those who had a greater need.(46)

For the spinners such arguments took on even greater cogency after mid-century. As Kirk has observed, the new model unions of the post-1850 period were pragmatic in their approach to political economy and were aware that improvements in their economic position "owed less to the forces of supply and demand than to trade union struggle".(47) The rules of the game were changing and wage bargaining gradually moving away from demands based on customary expectations and notions of a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, towards demands based on what the market would bear.(48) In the case of the spinners, their struggles with their employers in the later



1830s and the 1840s had weakened their status, authority and bargaining strength, (49) and the exclusion of women from the trade was, therefore, crucial to the maintenance of the spinners' position and their ability to demand high wage levels.

Despite the claims of the machine builders that the self-acting mule could easily be operated by an unskilled woman, spinning on the self-acting mule remained a technically demanding task with a skilled and experienced spinner making an appreciable difference to output. (50) The displacement of women from the long and double mules meant that by the time the self-acting mules were widely introduced "a cohort of women had not been trained in the mechanical skills of mule spinning for a decade", (51) and it was important to maintain the male monopoly of such skills. Of equal importance in maintaining their skilled status, however, were the supervisory and recruitment roles of the male spinners. The spinner-piecer system was a "convenient, effective and proven method of labour recruitment and management", (52) and given that strike defeats and lower labour requirements had substantially undermined the spinners' former recalcitrance, the employers were prepared to support their continuing authority within the factory. (53). Nevertheless, the spinners remained vulnerable to

attack by employers seeking to cut costs by use of female and child piecers to operate the machines. Though these became increasingly rare, (54) it was still important for them to maintain as strong a bargaining position as possible.

The spinning unions thus developed as 'closed', exclusive organisations charging high dues, generally indifferent to the position of other textile workers and, it goes without saying, strongly opposed to the employment of women in their trade. Clearly, in this instance there was a 'coincidence of interests' between workers and manufacturers which operated to support gender divisions of labour and the patriarchal authority of the male workforce. Thus Lazonick has argued that it was primarily a combination of

the power of discriminatory unions which kept women out of the occupation of mule spinning ... (and) ... the hierarchical relationships of capitalist production, which, by taking advantage of the 'skill' of patriarchal authority, secured the occupation of mule spinning for the men. (55)

In pursuing such strategies the spinners neither "colluded with pressure from the bourgeoisie", nor were they "bought off" by the capitalists, (56) but were exercising choices compatible with their lived

and perceived experiences. (57) The spinning unions were perfectly aware that a rejection of exclusivism in favour of mass collectivism would have destroyed the whole basis of their bargaining strength against their employers and, given the position of women in the labour market, it was inevitable that the spinners would discriminate against them as against other 'unskilled' labour. (58) Perhaps most importantly, however, an abandonment of their strong bargaining position would have meant, in the eyes of the spinners, an abrogation of their family responsibilities as husbands and fathers .(59)

Sally Alexander has considered the "two worlds in one" of the economy and the family (60) from the male perspective to explore inter-connections between images of masculinity and the masculine ideology of work, and has argued that, for skilled workers, "their status as fathers and heads of families was indelibly associated with their independence through 'honourable' labour and property in skill, which identification with a trade gave them".(61) If to 'status' we add 'responsibility', we come closer to understanding the mixture of values which informed the spinners' responses. Seccombe has made the point, and it is one that is sometimes forgotten, that not all working-class men were "uncaring bastards", (62) and for the responsible, caring husband and father

(and often for his wife as well) the ideals of the male breadwinner wage and of female domesticity could represent the best possible option in a hostile and difficult world. Support for the exclusion of women from factory work can thus be seen as a pragmatic response to domestic dislocation, an economic strategy towards more equitable conditions for all as well as to secure sectional gains, a defence and assertion of masculine personal identity and pride and a genuinely felt attempt to secure better conditions for all the family. That these ideals were not necessarily in the best interests of women, leaving many vulnerable to exploitation in less than ideal conditions, does not seem to have been a major factor in the equation.(63)

Interest in the attitudes and strategies of skilled workers has tended to divert attention away from unions such as the weavers' unions which did pursue strategies supportive of gender integration. In numerical terms, these were the representative unions of the cotton industry but their position was very different from that of the spinners and other skilled workers. Women formed the majority of the workforce and plentiful supplies of labour and the relatively unskilled nature of the job meant that exclusion was not a viable strategy for the male weavers to adopt. Weaving unions were, therefore,



'open', charging low dues and seeking mass support from all weavers, male and female, and employing strategies of collective bargaining in pursuit of standard rates of pay for all. Thus men and women, working together in the Blackburn Association of Cotton Weavers negotiated the first district price list for weaving wages in 1853, and continued to work together for the extension of the standard list across the industry. (64) But though the evidence is slight, there is some suggestion that the weavers also gave support to the ideal of the male breadwinner wage. Mrs. Fletcher, speaking at a meeting in the weaving town of Darwen in 1853, for example, argued "that every man should earn enough money to keep himself and his family without the necessity of sending his wife to the mill". (65) This limited evidence (66) provides a flimsy foundation from which to argue that male weavers endorsed domestic ideologies, but there was considerable justification, as the weavers understood it, for demands for the payment of a breadwinner wage to all male workers - and for the exclusion of women from the factories. Seccombe has summarised the arguments as follows:

The reasoning was very simple: If men could earn a living wage, then women would not have to work for pay; they would cease

competing for scarce jobs and bidding the price of labour down. But how were male earnings, beneath the level of the skilled tradesmen to rise to the level of a family subsistence wage? By segmenting the labour market, keeping men's jobs separate from women's, stigmatising gender cross-over either way, and restricting the entry of women to a trade or job category, wherever capitalists attempted to displace men in higher paid jobs by substituting cheap female labour. The proper role for women was to stay at home in their natural sphere, and concentrate their energies on being good homemakers for their husband and children.(67)

Or as the Miners' Association of Great Britain expressed it rather more bluntly in 1843, "keep the women at home to look after their families ... decrease the pressure on the labour market and there is then some chance of a higher rate of wages being enforced". (68) The force of the argument was such that gradually the whole of the trade union movement came to support the male breadwinner norm, regulation and phase out as a strategic policy in industrial bargaining.(69)

Cultural values of masculinity were a further source of cohesion across the male workforce with political practice and language giving substance to subjective, gender-based assumptions. Male

associations in trade unionism, in protest movements and in Chartist campaigns "bolstered their shared identity as men" and "promoted their common identification as family breadwinners, who struggled to regulate labour conditions in order to better secure their livelihoods". (70) The language of politics and the rhetoric used by male workers to express their grievances drew upon and reinforced axiomatic assumptions about the relative capabilities and responsibilities of men and women, with assumptions of "male privilege" and superiority being "embedded in popular conceptions of both skilled labour and authority". (71) 'Masculinity' was also a source of cross-class integration linking the aspirations of working men to the "emblems of masculinity" available to the middle classes (72) in a way that reinforced the moral impact of working-class demands for breadwinner wage levels.

It can be argued, therefore, that there was a consensus between the various sections of the male working class as to the utility and moral validity (and cause and effect cannot be separated) of 'domestic' ideals in their struggles to improve their lot. It can also be argued that this consensus linked working-class aspirations to the dominant moral views of Victorian society - even, perhaps, to employers' perceptions of what 'ought' to be, if only profit

margins allowed - towards a shared, cross-class male understanding of the ideal moral society. But still a puzzle remains. Why, if there was a consensus as to the natural and moral divisions of family labour was there no continuing widespread national agitation against the unnatural, immoral and increasing factory employment of women on the scale of the agitation of the 1830s and early 1840s? The short answer is that the issue was not one of high profile concern in the 1850s and 1860s because, in the industrial areas of Lancashire, what might be called a gender-based equilibrium was broadly established. Working men may or may not have achieved a breadwinner wage, women may or may not have been employed in the factories, but working-class family life was being reconstituted in forms broadly compatible with cultural values and the economic requirements of both family life and of capitalism. In short, the equilibrium disturbed by changes in the organisation of production in the earlier part of the century was being effectively restored as working people accommodated their lives to the economic, social and cultural status quo.

This can be seen most clearly in the case of skilled workers like the spinners, where high male earnings allowed 'respectable' life styles in line with 'ideal' definitions of gender roles held by the unions and the bourgeoisie. Even for low earners such



as the male weavers, however, though wives continued in employment, the organisation of work and of family life achieved a broad compatibility wherein cultural values of masculinity and femininity, independence and self-respect could be maintained despite less advantageous material circumstances.

Conditions of greater prosperity had some significance here. The period from 1850 to the mid 1870s was, overall, one of booming markets, increased profits, good labour relations and steadily improving wage levels. (73) Cotton factory workers still faced problems at particular points in the life cycle, personal crises caused by ill-health or accident, and periodic problems caused by industrial disputes and recurring economic crises (as in the cotton famine of 1851), but most experienced real improvement in money earnings and relatively more secure employment over the period. (74)

Not all shared equally in this relative improvement. There were substantial differences in earnings and conditions between geographical areas, between different employers and between different occupational groups, with large and increasing differentials between the earnings of the male spinners and the predominantly female weavers. (75) An important factor determining wage levels - and also, therefore, the achievement of a male wage

sufficient to support a non-earning wife - was also the nature of the relationship between employers and employees.

Contrary to the arguments of Hartmann and other exponents of the simple 'consensus' model of mid-century patriarchy, the majority of capitalist manufacturers in the post 1850 period did not recognise that their long-term interests lay in paying breadwinner wages to their male workers.(76) Adherence to the tenets of orthodox political economy largely outweighed considerations of morality, and immediate profitability was more important than the somewhat intangible benefits promised by exponents of domestic ideologies. Lancashire industrialists were "averse to all legislative interference with their concerns", (77) arguing that it was the 'right' of workers of either sex to "dispense their labour on whatever terms and under whatever circumstances they may individually and independently see fit" (78) and, as Dutton and King have argued, generally showed a "complete preoccupation with the affairs of the moment ... a single minded attention to expediency". (79).

If expediency did not support consensus, however, it did support an implicit process of industrial negotiation wherein workers and employers 'bargained' with each other, according to the

strengths and vulnerabilities of their respective positions. (80) And, particularly when times were good, pragmatic considerations led both workers and manufacturers towards a readier acceptance of negotiation and of compromise, in the reconciliation and accommodation of their respective interests. (81).

Though they were, in part, dependent on employer good-will in the maintenance of their position, a relationship based on mutual dependency had emerged between the spinners and their employers (82) as the manufacturers gradually came to recognise that efficiency and profitability were more effectively ensured by co-operative relationships with the new model, moderate unions. (83) This was not always the case, but disputes between the spinners and their employers became increasingly rare and the spinners came to enjoy a relative stability of employment and high levels of earnings. (84)

By virtue of their strong bargaining position, therefore, the spinners were able to achieve wage levels which allowed them to adopt a 'respectable' life style (85) commensurate with the domestic ideologies of the middle classes if they so chose. (86) And evidence of differences in employment patterns of married women between the weaving and spinning districts suggests that spinning families

were beginning to exercise choices against the factory employment of wives. Thus in 1861, the proportion of women aged over 20 in employment in cotton in the spinning towns of Bolton and Oldham was, at 25 per cent and 31.6 per cent respectively, noticeably lower than the 38.4 per cent and 35.6 per cent of adult women employed in the weaving factories of Blackburn and Preston. (87) And by the turn of the century, when the geographical split between weaving in the North of the county and spinning in the South was a well established fact, only around a fifth of married women worked in the spinning mills of Bolton and Oldham but around a third of married women worked in the weaving sheds of Blackburn, Burnley and Preston. (88) The higher female wages available in weaving may have exerted some influence here, 'pulling' women into factory work, but Anderson's conclusion that the 'push' of poverty was more important in determining the extent of married women's factory work, and that most working wives preferred not to work in the factories, gives support to the argument that married women preferred to give up factory work, if they could afford to do so. (89) Indeed, unless forced to this by absolute want, the values of 'respectability' increasingly defined the factory as most definitely not the place where a spinner's wife ought to be. (90)



But if the strong bargaining position of the spinners enabled them to achieve wage levels sufficient generally to support a family, the same was not true of the weavers. With little in the way of valued skills with which to bargain, forced to rely on collective action in their struggles for union recognition and improved conditions, the weavers encountered much stiffer employer resistance than did the spinners.(91) The fiercely competitive conditions that existed in Blackburn may have encouraged manufacturers to co-operate with the unions in the fixing of standard wages and prices, but the majority of Lancashire industrialists remained fiercely opposed to any extension of the Blackburn list. (91) The weak and often short-lived unions of the vulnerable weavers were seen as essentially subordinate, to be used or ignored as it suited the manufacturers. (92) And if the spinners' employers inclined towards a paternalistic, if pragmatic concern for their welfare - and there is a very suggestive geographical correlation which seems to link paternalism with spinning (93) -the coercion and hostility that was more often the lot of the weavers suggests that their employers were more inclined towards exploitation. The much lower wage levels earned by the weavers, therefore, reflect not only the cheapness of 'women's work' but also the

weak bargaining position of the unions though the two, of course, are related in many complex ways. (94). As the average earnings of Manchester weavers illustrates, the male breadwinner wage was indeed a pipe dream, with average earnings of 11s. a week in 1850, 12s.6d. in 1860 and 14s. in 1871, being well below the level needed to support a family except in the most extreme conditions of poverty. (95) So, as we have seen, the working and earning wife remained commonplace in the weaving towns of North Lancashire. (96)

An equal obligation to earn was matched, on the surface, with a rough and ready equality between male and female workers within the factory. Male weavers possessed no special skills which placed a premium on their labour, their position as a numerical minority in the labour force and strategies of collective action all operated against gender differentiation and men and women worked alongside each other and were paid the same rates for the job. In reality, however, there were inequalities of earnings, work and authority within the weaving sheds which differentiated male from female labour. Supervisory jobs as tacklers and overlookers were reserved for men, 'driving' and other coercive pressures to greater productivity were most often directed against women, (97) and a "real, though unobtrusive segregation", as

the Webbs described it, operated to deny equal earnings to women.

There is no attempt to discriminate between women's work and men's work as such ... But taking the cotton weaving trade as a whole, the great majority of women will be found engaged on the comparatively light work paid at the lower rates. On the other hand, a majority of the men will be found practically monopolising the heavy trade, priced at higher rates per yard, and resulting in larger weekly earnings.(98)

Male weavers also dominated the weaving trade unions and women rarely held positions of responsibility, though they played an important role in strike actions.(99) In effect, though the male weavers' earnings were too low to allow conformity to the male breadwinner ideal, male dominance was reinforced within the factory by "unofficial means, sanctioned by the employers (and) the inequality of the sexes was symbolised and proclaimed to the cotton community".(100)

Conformity to the ethics of respectability also reinforced gender inequalities even though weaving families could not afford the style of life available to the spinners. Despite Joyce's assertion that, in this period, "the stigma of female labour that existed in the spinning areas does not seem to have

characterised weaving ... (and)... working was a source of pride and respectability to women workers", (101) it seems more likely that conspicuous demonstration of a respectable domestic style of life was rather more important. It may even have been that a display of domestic capability and wifely obedience was necessary to avert any such 'stigma', and though women may well have taken a well-justified pride in their vital contribution to the family budget, their pride and self-respect was demonstrated and judged by the standards of domestic competence displayed in the home. Burnett has commented, for example, on the constant concern expressed in nineteenth and early twentieth century autobiographies with cleanliness and order. "This preoccupation, amounting almost to an obsession in some housewives (sic), was a distinguishing feature of the 'respectable' working class, marking them off from the feckless, dirty, uncaring and undeserving poor." (102)

In sum, though many weaving families could not aspire to the ideals of the male breadwinner supporting a non-earning wife, male authority and gender divisions of labour were supported and maintained in the workplace, the community and in the home. Though their material circumstances and styles of life were often very different, work and family life were again symmetrical for both the spinners and



the weavers. The traditional family form, with its divisions of roles and responsibilities had been reconstituted. Male authority was assured and equilibrium was re-established.

This recognition that the re-establishment of symmetry between the factory and working-class family life allowed a variety of life styles and that social equilibrium could also accommodate the factory wife, also casts new light on the notion of a coincidence of interests between philanthropy, the state and the male working-class. When the situation is re-interpreted in terms of the re-affirmation of patriarchy, with its essential elements of male dominance and female subordination and gender divisions of labour, then the consensus model makes sense. The re-interpretation of patriarchy expressed in the ideal model of the male breadwinner and the dependent domestic housewife served an important purpose in linking the aspirations of the working-classes to the social norms of the bourgeoisie but the 'new model' family form did not meet adequately the needs of capital or of the workers. The reinforcement of patriarchy as a fundamental principle of social organisation, however, provided an infinitely more flexible model, one where masculine, philanthropic, capitalist and state concerns could be reconciled in a 'coincidence of

interests'. For the manufacturers, utilisation of the values and practices of patriarchy encouraged the good will, stability and welfare (through improvement in standards of domestic care), the smooth operation of production and, at the same time, maintained a supply of cheap, readily exploited female labour which could be used or discarded as market forces dictated.(103) For skilled workers, 'new model' patriarchy supported their 'honourable labour and pride in skill', their high wages and their masculine self-esteem, whilst also providing for their domestic comforts at home. For the unskilled male workers, with domestic dislocation eased somewhat by limitations on female factory labour, the reconstitution of the traditional patriarchal family and gender differentiation within the factory, buttressed male pride (104) while domestic ideologies served, in theory at least, to give moral substance to claims for higher wages. Some adjustments had proved necessary to accommodate conflicting interests, but with the acceptance of the principle of a male breadwinner wage for key workers and the imposition of overt and covert limitations on women's factory work to sustain gender divisions of labour and female dependence, the immediate and long term interests of capital, the state and the male working-classes were reconciled in a consensus that was both

ideological and pragmatic.(105)

Many working-class women also seem to have supported the ideal of the male breadwinner wage - or at least to have accepted it as the best means of improving their own position. (106) As we have seen earlier, though women protested against the conditions of their lives in the 1820s and 1830s, they do not seem to have challenged gender divisions of labour at that period, nor in subsequent years. A reliance on circumstantial evidence is unavoidable here as women's declining participation in radical protest and political movements means there is little direct evidence of their views, but this does suggest at least an implicit acceptance of the status quo and, as Thompson has argued, "women seem to have accepted an image of themselves which involved both home-centredness and inferiority" (107) after the 1840s. What women sought, argues Thompson, "was the enfranchisement of the working people as a whole and not a change in the relative social and legal position of the sexes". (108)

There were also sound economic reasons why women should support the ideology of the male breadwinner wage. As Gray has summed up,

Economic structure and ideology were mutually reinforcing in perpetuating the sexual division of labour in industry, the

home and society. The exclusion of women and the demand for a breadwinner wage for men was an industrial bargaining strategy, enabling men to make sectional gains while women provided employers with a pool of casual labour at below subsistence wages. For women confronted by the limited opportunities of the labour market, marriage could offer better chances of survival; moreover the time devoted to household tasks could have an appreciable effect on the living standards of even the poorest families. Hence ideologies of domesticity did not function as abstract ideas, but were embedded in the material conditions of working-class life.(109)

Unfortunately, the male breadwinner wage ideology did little to emancipate many women from their double burden. Indeed, the reverse was often the case, with the assumption that female wages were essentially supplementary being reinforced by the male breadwinner ideology in continuing support for below subsistence wage rates for women's work. Where husbands did not earn sufficient to support a family, therefore, or where women were the family breadwinner as many were, (110) they found themselves continuing to work long hours for pittance wages. A young single girl might earn enough to allow some degree of independence but her earnings would have risen little as she got older, (111) and at around 11s. per week in



1850, 12s.6d. in 1860 and 14s. in 1870 (112) even the relatively high earnings of the female weaver were totally inadequate for family support. As a trade union official commented at the end of the century, in comparison with male wage rates, women were paid "the wages of the poorest poor" (113). The continuing presence of women in the labour market also depressed male wage levels, as employers across a range of occupations were able to continue paying low wages to male workers secure in the knowledge that the earnings of wives would bring family incomes up to subsistence levels. Women were thus "trapped in a vicious circle" as Roberts has described; "they worked because they had to, but by working they ensured that they and other women would have to continue working" (114).

The disadvantages of the non-earning housewife's position were not so immediately apparent, particularly if she had a 'good' husband. Seccombe's definition of the good husband and father in a patriarchal context is one "who exercises his prerogatives with some demonstrable sense of responsibility for the welfare of his subordinate kin" (115) but as Mary Merryweather found in Halstead, many women had very low expectations of their treatment by their husbands. She remarked,

If we said to a poor woman who came for relief, "I hope your husband is kind to you", the answer often was, "Well Ma'am, he don't pay me (beat me), implying that she was grateful for that amount of goodness.(116)

The breadwinner wage was seen to be earned by the husband, with the work of his wife being perceived as a labour of love, not deserving of economic reward. A wife owned no property, any money she was able to earn belonged by law to her husband (117) and she had no legal existence apart from her husband. The male breadwinner wage both reinforced her dependent status and gave an economic legitimacy to relations of male dominance and female subordination. Writing in The Pioneer in 1834, Frances Morrison had summed up "power relations" in working-class families dependent on male wages as ones which made women subject to their husbands "in a yoke of bondage".

If a working man should make thirty shillings a week he may drink ten pints if he pleases; go to a coffee house every night and read the papers, and bring in fifteen shillings a week to keep home and pay the rent withal. He has the right to do this, for he makes the money. But what is the woman doing? She is working from morning till night at housekeeping; she is bearing children, ... ; she is cooking and washing, and cleaning; soothing one child,

cleaning another and feeding a third. And all this is for nothing; for she gets no wages. Her wages come from her husband; they are optional; he can give her either twenty shillings to keep house with, or he can give her only ten. If she complains, he can damn and swear, and say, like the Duke of Newcastle, 'Have I not a right to do as I please with my own?' And it is high treason for women to resist such authority and claim the privilege of a fair reward for their labour! (original emphasis) (118)

We do not know how many working men abused their power in this way. The point is, as Morrison stressed, that men had a right to retain their wages for their own use if they so wished; a right that was based on gender divisions of labour and a patriarchal social and economic organisation that forced the majority of women into dependence upon men. (119).

This is not to imply that all working men were domestic tyrants and their wives down-trodden victims, but as the norms of 'respectability' show very clearly, the social world of the post 1850s was constructed in line with the male view of the world, and giving priority to male concerns. As Kirk has commented, "respectable workers had a strong and positive evaluation of home and family ... (but) ... much of the responsibility for the cultivation of 'sound' and 'respectable' habits within the family

was placed on women". (120) Conversely, women were also held to be responsible for non-respectable behaviour. Thomas Wright, for example, attributed male drunkenness and 'disreputable' behaviour to the failure of "lazy, slovenly, mis-managing wives" to maintain standards of domestic comfort. Similarly, Joseph Corbett attributed his father's drunkenness and the consequent poverty and unhappiness of the family to the domestic inadequacies of his mother. The moral of his story was plain; the father of the family might be "ignorant" and "intemperate", the mother might work all hours of the day and night to provide for her family, but it was her failure to organise housework "so as not to annoy the husband" as would be done in "a well-regulated house" that had brought about the the family's downfall.(121)

The main fault of this poor woman, however, was her lack of training in domestic economy. For education, while being "the key to independence and political and social emancipation "(122) for men, was the key to domestic efficiency for women, with similar gender-based distinctions across all the 'key' elements of respectability. To men it meant self-reliance and independence, with a refusal to be "petted, pampered and patronised" by their 'betters'.(123) For women, however, respectability meant the very opposite. They were not seen to be



capable of managing their own affairs beyond those of the care of the household, their reliance was to be placed on their husbands and any show of independence on their part was distinctly unwelcome. Self-respect, for men, lay in "honest endeavour" in their employment, in a strong commitment to personal advancement and to providing for the economic needs of the family. For women it meant honest endeavour in unpaid domestic labour, a strong commitment to the advancement of husband and children and to providing for their domestic and emotional needs. 'Respectability', in short, was defined by patriarchal principles to mean, for women, the abnegation of individual rights against the prior claims of husband, home and family.

The women of Lancashire, particularly the factory women of Lancashire, paid a heavy price for the limited 'independence' they enjoyed.(124) The unions had come to terms with the new order of industrial capitalism, with agreements between working man and their employers as to the new 'rules of the game' but they were rules which heavily reinforced handicaps on women. At the heart of reformism lay the principles and practices of patriarchy, permeating all aspects of Lancashire life (125) and imposing heavy burdens on women. Men negotiated the terms of social and industrial peace but it was largely women who paid

the costs.

Let the last word be given to Ellen Barlee who visited Lancashire in 1862 and saw the realities of the married woman's existence at first hand. "On Saturday", she said, "the mills close at midday and the men and single women make real holiday", but

the married women, who seem the slaves of Lancashire society, are obliged then, however, to set to work harder than ever. They have only this day to clean their houses, provide for the week's bake for the family, mend clothes, beside doing any washing that is not put out, and attend the market to purchase the Sunday's dinner.... Then there is also the washing the children and setting them to rights ... so that the poor mother seldom gets a rest ere the Sabbath dawns if, indeed, she is not up all night. (126)

If the 'double burden' of domestic work and paid employment thus condemned respectable Lancashire women to a life of near 'slavery', what of the married women of rural Norfolk and Suffolk? With conditions in the agricultural districts distinctly unconducive to ideologies of domesticity and the achievement of male wages sufficient to maintain a wife and family how did they and their families fare? Were the forces of reformism equally influential in

the agricultural districts in restoring a patriarchal equilibrium to social and economic organisation?

**Repression and Resistance: Rural Norfolk and Suffolk from the later 1830s to 1870**

If reconciliation and reformism were the keynotes of developments in the textile regions of Lancashire towards the latter part of the period, repression remained the characteristic keynote of social relationships in the rural areas of the East. Stung by the accusations of cruelty and exploitation directed against manufacturers in the 1830s, many industrialists sought to defend themselves by pointing to conditions outside the factory districts, arguing that workers in other areas of employment were more exploited and badly treated than their own employees. Nowhere was this more evident than in the rural areas of Suffolk and Norfolk, though the "silent suffering" of the rural population largely remained "hidden by the rustic cabin with its thatched roof and picturesque dilapidations". (127) By the later 1830s social relations between the rural proletariat and the farming classes had deteriorated to such an extent that Digby's description of the situation as an "undeclared civil war" hardly exaggerates the case. As she summed up with reference

to Norfolk, the agricultural districts of the East of England

had become a battleground of conflicting interests in which the abdication from social responsibility of the propertied was matched by the alienation from duty and loyalty by the poor.(128)

The glut of labour, rural isolation, fear of the workhouse and widespread desperation for work, and an almost complete dependence on the goodwill of the farmers for relief as well as employment had robbed the labourers of all ability to bargain for better conditions, while open protest had been ruled out by the severity with which the Swing riots had been settled in the early 1830s. The coercive operation of the New Poor Law had delivered the final blow severing the chains of social dependence and from the functional protests of earlier times, where labourers had sought to remind their social superiors of their responsibilities towards working people, disaffected working people turned to "underground terrorism" to express their bitterness and alienation. (129) Covert protest took many forms; from cattle maiming, poaching, the sending of threatening letters, attacks on property and on persons, and even highway robbery but the chief method was incendiarism. And by the early 1840s arson attacks had become so common across



the two counties that local people wryly referred to incendiaryism as "our disease". (130)

The much vaunted 'independence' of the labouring classes was fast becoming a double-edged sword. Though "the men now had to be more submissive than they used to be ... and the masters knew it", (131), the farmers also knew the bitterness and resentment generated by economic conditions and the New Poor Law. A witness to the 1837 Select Committee on the Poor Law reported,

the ill-feeling between the labouring people and those above them is very bad; there s a very strong and ill feeling now, much more than is generally imagined, much more than I have witnessed in the North on any occasion. (132)

Reliance continued to be placed on the labourers' vulnerability in the labour market to enforce desired attitudes and behaviours, but as incendiary attacks on farm property and violence continued to escalate and crime statistics to rise (133) increasing attention was directed at more immediate methods of preserving the social order and constabulary forces were established in Norfolk and East and West Suffolk in the 1840s. (134) Despite this, high levels of crime and incendiaryism continued to disturb the countryside, with a general support for such attacks

throughout the labouring population that was indicative of the parlous state of rural social relations. Unmoved by threats or promises of reward, many actively hindered attempts to control the fires and as firemen and constables rushed to put out fires, they were cheered on their way by groups of working people shouting "it's no use", and "too late, too late". (135)

Again, the immediate response to the escalation of violence was a tightening up of coercion. But when transportation was welcomed as an improvement in the conditions of life, (136) when criminal statistics remained high with continuing high levels of incendiarism, all but the most obdurate or obtuse began to question whether harsh and retributive coercion was sufficient defence against disaffection and crime. In the debate that ensued, national as well as local opinion was informed by the wide publicity given to rural incendiarism, with the extended investigation by Thomas Campbell Foster of The Times bringing the problems of rural Suffolk firmly to the forefront of the 'condition of England' debates.

Careful and detailed investigation of the everyday realities of life in the agricultural communities led Foster to estimate that at least 70% of family earnings were spent on food and basic shop goods,

and, as he showed, the diet of the average family was vastly inferior to that provided in the supposedly 'less eligible' workhouse. (137) The weekly budget of Robert Crick, a farm labourer from Lavenham in Suffolk, (138) serves to illustrate the conditions of poverty endemic to most labouring families in the region in the early 1840s, with an income from total family earnings of only 13s.9d. per week, matched by expenditure of 13s.9d. on only the most basic necessities of food and household goods. Normally, the rent for a family's cottage would have been provided by their harvest earnings, but with no reserves for unemployment or sickness, little money for clothing, friendly society subscriptions or for school pence, little wonder that working people claimed "We can't live honestly".(139) In such conditions, (and they were to worsen in the later 1840s and 1850s (140)), the earnings of women and children could make a crucial difference between family survival or recourse to the workhouse. Even more than to the weaving families of Lancashire, the 'ideal' of the male breadwinner wage was a pipe dream for the agricultural workers of Norfolk and Suffolk.

Evidence of the extent of increase in the waged work of women following the changes in the payment of poor relief in 1834 is limited, but there is some evidence to support contemporary statements of "a

great addition of females working abroad" and "the taking of children from school to earn a few pence".(141) Census evidence must be received with caution, as the 'hidden' agricultural work of women was generally not recorded, but taking Higgs's calculations as a guideline for an admittedly very crude estimate of the actual work of women, the following breakdown can be given: (142)

The Employment of Women in Agriculture in Norfolk and Suffolk

	Census figures	Estimate revisions
Suffolk	1841 698	7,000
	1851 383	1,600
	1861 333	2,000
Norfolk	1841 890	8,700
	1851 2,157	9,000
	1861 3,258	3,258

Drawing on the evidence of the 1843 Commission of Enquiry into the work of women and children in agriculture, Pinchbeck estimated that women and children represented around 1/3 to 1/6 of the male agricultural labour force in the district between Ipswich and Woodbridge, and that around half the women of the Woodbridge district were employed in



field work. (143) Around Lavenham, however, "as the supply of male labour is in most instances equal to the demand, women are not much employed on the land", while around Mildenhall women's work ranged from nothing at all in the winter months to employment on a variety of tasks over the remainder of the year. (144)

The practice of sub-contracting female labour in gangs also increased, though this is impossible to quantify. The point is not, however, that women and children were desperate for work at any price or that the 8d. per day that a woman might earn was vital to her family. (145) It is rather that there was little, beyond casual and seasonal work, available to women and girls. As in the early 1830s, the problems of Norfolk and Suffolk remained those of working-class poverty and female underemployment.

Notwithstanding the harsh economic realities of rural working-class life, the Commissioners inquiring into the employment of women and children in agriculture in 1843 found much to deplore. The gang system was condemned not only for the physical hardships forced on workers, but also because of its supposedly injurious moral consequences, (145) and like her counterpart in the industrial north, the rural wife and mother was said to be deficient in every way. Her children were physically and morally

neglected and she was ignorant. "Even where they have been taught to read and write", stated Mr. Austin,

the women of the agricultural labouring class are in a state of ignorance, affecting the daily welfare and comfort of their families. Ignorance of the commonest things, needlework, cooking and other matters of domestic economy, is described as nearly universally prevalent. (146)

And just as in the factory districts, the supposed deficiencies of the rural housewife were held to be responsible for the undesirable behaviours exhibited by the male labourers.

The husband is also a sufferer from his wife's absence at home. There is not the same order in the cottage, nor the same attention paid to his comforts as when the wife remains at home all day ... He may come home tired and wet; he finds his wife has arrived just before him; she must give her attention to the children; there is no fire, no supper, no comfort, and he goes to the beer shop. (147)

The sheer incongruity of domestic ideologies in the context of such grinding poverty does seem to have occurred to the Commissioners, however, and there was some expressed ambivalence regarding the acceptability or otherwise of women's work in agriculture. Even Mr. Austin was able to appreciate

that the 'moral' dimensions of domestic ideologies might be counterbalanced by other 'evils'.

upon the fullest consideration, I believe that the earnings of a woman employed in the fields are an advantage which, in the present state of the agricultural population, outweighs any of the mischiefs arising from such employment. All direct interference in the employment of women in agriculture must be deprecated at present. The evils that attend it can only be relieved by generally bettering the condition of the agricultural labouring class.(148)

Even the evils of gang labour were counterbalanced by a recognition that, were it to be forcibly curtailed, "immorality and crime would be increased by idleness and distress". (149)

It is tempting to speculate, however, on a possible reversal of such conclusions had the Commission of Inquiry followed after the escalation of disturbances in the agricultural depression in the mid 1840s. For with the limitations of economic policing and repressive coercion exposed by the ever increasing crime rates and the widespread alienation of the labouring population, attention was increasingly directed towards ways and means of securing the allegiance of working people to the new economic and social order. And given the Evangelical perspective

on the moral responsibilities of women embedded within domestic ideologies, it is not unlikely that the Commissioners would have seen the domestication of the female members of the agricultural classes as a prime solution to rural unrest. Nor is too far fetched to suggest that the 'dramatic' interest in the 'rural problem' may have caused the Commission's disclosures to have been followed by an avalanche of polemic, on the scale equal to that generated by disclosures of the 'evils' of the factory system, against the perceived inadequacies and immoralities of the 'farming girl'. More than chronology, however, the absence of such a furore was probably due to the transient nature of interest in the problems of the agricultural labouring population. As John Bright observed, with a cynical appreciation of the real motivation often underlying expressions of social concern, "If they had in Lancashire, instead of 250 fires in nine months, one in a month, much surprise would have been expressed that they (the members for the manufacturing districts) had not made a proposition for an investigation into a matter of such consequence". (150)

The bovine and ignorant peasantry depicted in stereotype did not strike the same fear into the hearts of the nation as did the threatening masses of the industrial towns of the North, and when the Home



Secretary and the members for Norfolk and Suffolk denied the evidence of rural discontent and social unrest, a motion for the establishment of a government enquiry into the events in East Anglia and the Home Counties was easily defeated. (151) As a consequence, though the condition of rural England still attracted widespread attention, the organisation of possible solutions was left to local and charitable initiatives.

Thus though a whole plethora of suggestions for reform were put forward, (152) local conditions largely determined the extent to which proposed remedies were put into effect. Suggestions that schooling should be extended were not well received; not only would this deprive farmers of the cheap labour of boys, it might also foster unwelcome attitudes of independence or encourage labourers to seek work outside farming, and who was to pay for this? And while there was some recognition that the root causes of unrest were to be found in the hardships experienced by labouring families, few members of the farming classes were prepared to put the welfare of the labouring classes before economic self-interest. There was, however, a re-awakening of interest in the benefits to be gained from a more paternalistic and less immediately exploitive character in social relations between the classes,

with the extension of a limited number of benefits to the working population. Humanitarian impulses also must not be denied, but in the concern for the well-being of the deserving poor (153) that led to some limited improvements in housing, in the provision of some allotments and a few more schools in the area, and in the establishment of societies such as 'The West Suffolk Society for the Improvement of the Condition of Labourers', humanitarianism was informed by a pragmatic awareness that such measures were also contributory in building relationships resonant more of consensus than conflict. As the award of prizes to labourers demonstrating 'industrious habits' and 'good conduct', and the establishment of societies "for the purpose of encouraging and rewarding good conduct in Agricultural Labourers and Servants" neatly illustrates, benevolence was often intertwined with purposes of social control.(154) If the poor could not be forced to behave, if socialisation via schooling conferred other, unwelcome advantages, perhaps the payment of rewards would do the trick.

Similarly, the provision of allotments was seen to be a means of giving working people 'a stake in the soil' - though with the size of the 'stake' nicely judged to limit the amount of independence thus bestowed.

as it is desirable that the profits of the allotment should be viewed in the light of an aid, and not of a substitute (to) income accruing from wages, and that they should not become an inducement to neglect his (the labourer's) usual paid labour, the allotment should be of no greater extent than can be cultivated during the leisure moments of the labourer and his family.(155)

Roberts has argued,

the allotment was the best mode of institutionalising paternalism: it gave the labourer the added food to tide him over in the January frost: it kept him working in the evenings and away from the beer shop; it earned him the extra pennies for the clothing club; it awakened his interest in agricultural improvements. It gave him, as the Duke of Richmond shrewdly observed 'a stake in the hedge'. (156)

More than this, what the allotment provided was an opportunity to recreate a way of family life that had been lost. (157) This is implicit in Glyde's description of the benefits of paternalism as demonstrated in the parish of Wickham Market, where an harmonious interaction between the organisation of employment and gender divisions of labour within the family complemented and cemented harmonious bonds between different social groups.(158) Rather than providing men with a useful and rewarding spare-time

activity, the allotments provided employment for women as an alternative to field labour, and in many instances where allotments were provided the work was done principally by them.(159) As the 1843 Commission recognised, in Norfolk and Suffolk the allotments were the only thing "which at all supplies the place of spinning", (160) that is, in supplying work that enabled women to supplement family incomes without drastic interference with their prime responsibilities for child care and domestic labour. The allotment was thus the best mode of institutionalising paternalism as it represented and enabled, albeit in a small way, a return to 'traditional' values and ways of life across all spheres. It restored an equilibrium to the organisation of labour in production and in the family.

Though the gentry and clergy of Norfolk and Suffolk might recognise the benefits to be gained from 'soft' forms of coercion and lend their support to the allocation of allotments and of schools, the farmers were less willing to do so. The energies of working men and women should be expended on the farmers' lands, not on their own allotments, and boys were needed in the fields. And here we return again to the same point that has been made many times before - that, because labour surplus conferred



enormous power on them, the farmers safely could ignore the value systems of the labourers in their organisation of production. Economic self-interest on the part of the majority of farmers, therefore, often led them to subvert the good intentions of reformers and more benevolently inclined members of the local community. In Norfolk, for example, though legally obliged to provide allotments on newly enclosed land after 1845, less than 2.2 per cent of 6,000 acres enclosed between 1845-1870 was so allocated and, where land was provided, exorbitant rents, difficulty of access and poor quality of land (161) often reduced their value to the labouring population. And, as will be shown, hostility towards schooling extended to the deliberate prevention of school attendance, particularly for boys.

More than the immediate effects of poverty, economic conditions were also highly significant in the structure and quality of relationships between parents and children, with, in Norfolk and Suffolk an almost complete reversal of the picture drawn by Anderson of parental child relations in Preston in mid century. (162) In the agricultural East, the loss of child allowances in 1834 and the consequent dependence on child earnings to supplement parental incomes placed a premium on the financial contribution of boys. This created, as Snell has

argued, (163) a strong motive to keep boys at home, despite pressure on space within small cottages. At the same time, a lack of employment opportunities for girls meant that they could contribute little to the family budget, with a consequent pressure on them to leave home to find employment away from the family environment. Flora Thompson wrote of family life in Oxfordshire in the 1880s,

The parents did not want the boys to leave home. Later on, if they wished to strike out for themselves, they might even meet with opposition, for their money, though barely sufficient to keep them in food, made a little more in the family purse and every shilling was precious. The girls, while at home, could earn nothing ... if there was any inconvenience it must not fall on the boys; if there was a limited quantity of anything the boys must still have their full share. (164)

As Jeffries wrote, "a girl is made day by day to feel her fault in being a girl". (165) As in Lancashire, the women of Suffolk and Norfolk were 'devalued' by the operation of gender divisions of labour.

'Respectable' options for rural girls were extremely limited. If exceptionally fortunate or able a rural girl might, though her chances were so small as to be almost non-existent, stay at school long enough to acquire the 'academic' skills that would qualify her

for a job in teaching. (166) She might stay at home to help her mother or to free her for work in the fields. Or, and this was "the chief field of labour for young women" as Glyde described it, (167) she might enter domestic service.

Typically, girls started their working lives in local employment in the homes of the wealthier members of the community, and, after learning the skills of their trade, moved on to more distant employment. Nine-tenths of the domestic servants in Ipswich were girls from the country districts, and a high proportion of the 32,000 Suffolk-born people living in London in 1851 would have been women in domestic service. (168) Though Richards' description of domestic service as 'disguised underemployment' aptly sums up the way in which domestic service absorbed what gender ideologies and economic organisation had jointly defined as the 'surplus' labour of women, (169) it still held many attractions for the country girl. Not least among these was the fact that, unless exceptionally unfortunate, food and accommodation in service would have been superior to that available in the average labourer's cottage and that, in comparison with other female occupations, domestic servants were fairly well paid. (170) Perhaps most importantly, domestic service offered a well-defined and easily accessible escape route away

from the limited prospects and poverty-stricken conditions of the rural areas towards the promise of a better future. Under the "compulsive influence" of domestic service, therefore, the out-migration of village girls was a regular feature of life in the rural communities. (171)

Out-migration was not confined to teenage girls going into service, and from the 1850s became an established feature of life in the agricultural communities of Norfolk and Suffolk. Opposition from farmers anxious to preserve the 'free' labour market that gave them such an economic hold over the labourers had previously compounded the notorious 'stay at home' attitude of Suffolk and Norfolk men, but with the spread of education and the coming of the railways, (171) the geographically and socially isolated world of the East Anglian farming communities was opened up to new opportunities and out-migration began to accelerate. The railways themselves were an important source of employment as was the police force and the Post Office and, often with the assistance of local clergy and gentry, young men began increasingly to find employment outside farming. (172). The process was often gradual and cumulative; from the village to the local town to larger urban centres or following the lead set by a 'pathfinder' from the village, but even as early as



1851 Glyde calculated 15 Suffolk born people who had moved away for every 100 county inhabitants. (173)

The result was a loosening of the stranglehold grip of the farmers, as labour surplus was reduced and farmers began to realise that they were in danger of losing their younger and more enterprising workers. Wages began slowly to rise and conditions slowly to improve (174) as farmers sought to keep their labourers and as the labourers themselves began to demonstrate a genuine independence in strike actions and occasional combinations. Even if the labourers had not, as yet, acquired the weapons enabling them to fight effectively and openly for their share of prosperity as Charlesworth suggests, (175) the gradual disappearance of the labour surplus from the 1850s meant that things were very definitely on the mend by the 1860s.

Better conditions in the 1860s also seem to have been accompanied by a decline in the agricultural work of women. Except where wages were still very low, women were abandoning much field labour in response to what Mr. Fraser of the 1867 Commission on the employment of women and children in agriculture referred to as "natural and spontaneous influences". "Everywhere", he said, he "heard the same story":

that women are found to be less and less disposed to go out to work upon the land.

They will refuse unsuitable work; they will stay at home on wet days. Whether from easier circumstances in which they live, or from their having become intelligent enough to make more accurate measure of loss and gain, there seems to be much less attraction for them in the farmer's 8d. or 9d. a day than there used to be. (176)

The second Report in 1869 also commented on this trend, again suggesting that the profit and loss equation had shifted against women's employment in agriculture in favour of domesticity.

There appears to be, almost everywhere, an increasing disinclination to field work on the part of women ... Those whom I visited and talked to often told me that although they themselves had always been in the habit of working they had made up their minds that it did not answer and that they would not encourage their children to take to it. They seem to be arriving at a conviction that where a cottage is to be kept clean and tidy, and a family provided for, the whole time of the mother of the family should be spent indoors, and that the money she can earn by going into the fields is insufficient to compensate her for the necessary loss which is occasioned by her absence at home. (177)

Mr. Fraser confessed, however, to some real perplexity on the subject of female employment, weighing the pros and cons of female field work in an

argument which considered several aspects of the question. There was, first of all, the now strongly established convention that women ought not to be employed in work so inappropriate to their natural sphere. "It is universally admitted", stated Mr. Fraser,

that such employment, ... is to a great extent demoralising. Not only does it almost unsex a woman, in dress, gait, manners, character, making her rough, coarse, clumsy, masculine; but it generates a further very pregnant social mischief, by unfitting or indisposing her for a woman's proper duties at home.

Not only that, field work also disinclined girls from their 'proper' work as domestic servants and dairy maids. On the other hand, women were needed on the land and their earnings were needed to supplement family incomes. According to Lord Leicester, Norfolk farming "could not be effectively performed without them;" and, Mr. Fraser continued,

there is an almost universal opinion that only by a tyrannical use of power could the legislature step in and prevent, at any rate adult and married women, from gaining their livelihood and adding to the scanty resources of their family by any means that are honest and in themselves innocent.(178)

A similar dilemma was also expressed in the second

Report, for if single women were excluded from field labour, what else was there for them to do?

If domestic service, marriage, needlework, shops, and charring will absorb the women there will be no moral risk of excluding female labour from the fields ... if such exclusion narrows the range of female occupations, and a class of idle or starving women is produced, the gain to morals is doubtful enough. (179)

The solutions put forward to the 'evils' consequent on female agricultural work were the same as those put forward against women's factory labour; legislation to remove what were seen to be the worst abuses and the education of girls towards a proper appreciation of their womanly duties. Thus the Agricultural Gangs Act of 1867 limited the employment and labour of children and provided that gangs should be strictly segregated by sex, with women's gangs being accompanied by a licensed female in addition to the gang-master. The rest was left to the power of education to reinforce those benevolent 'natural and spontaneous influences' that were taking women away from the fields.

We see here, in the reports of the Commission, a similar shift in thinking to that seen in Lancashire in the mid 1840s. Unlike in Lancashire, however, the ideologies of gender expressed within these reports



appear to be almost totally irrelevant to the social and cultural context of life in the agricultural communities of Norfolk and Suffolk; like some sort of veneer visible only to establishment figures such as the Commissioners and to the clergy and gentry whose views they cite. Rather than ideological consensus, rather than any economically or politically motivated rationale, the increasingly home-centred attitudes of working-class women that are signalled in the reports seem to have resulted from a pragmatic alignment of interests wherein what suited working men and women was acceptable to employers and more or less coincided with dominant ideologies. Natural and spontaneous the desire to avoid lifting turnips on a wet day may well have been, but what seems to have been more important was the relative improvement in economic conditions which freed many women from the obligation to work in the fields to the same extent as previously. With rising male wages, many families could now manage on the combined earnings of husbands and sons, particularly if they were fortunate enough to have an allotment. A rise in the proportion of boys aged 10 - 14 in employment (180) may, possibly, represent a shift in values with their employment in field work being seen as more 'suitable' than that of their mothers. (181) At the same time, increased use of agricultural machinery may have reduced the demand

for women's labour, and there is no evidence, as there is for Dorset, of farmers seeking to force women back into agricultural labour against their will. (182)

Rising expectations were probably also a factor here. Out-migration not only led to improvements in the immediate conditions of life and labour, it also encouraged parents to want better for their children than agricultural labour- "they had made up their minds it did not answer and they would not encourage their children to it" as the 1868 report stated. (183) And in the words of Mary Cole, the wife of a Norfolk shepherd and mother of 14 children, we see a glimpse of how parental hopes for their children might be informed by gender-based assumptions, but whether derived from dominant ideologies or from a pragmatic acceptance of the realities of a gender divided world who can tell? She told the Commissioners how she had taken in washing to pay for her girls to go to school:

Not having any learning herself, so she determined her girls at any rate should have as much as she could give them ... She was very often blamed by her neighbours for not sending her girls into the fields, but her head was high and she wouldn't. She said to herself, "We'll see how it'll turn out. It's the ruination of the country,

girls going into the fields; they will make neither good wives nor good mothers; and what do they know of needlework? (184)

The evidence is partial, of course. The views of Mrs. Cole's neighbours can only be guessed at but it is a fairly safe assumption that middle-class ideologies of women's roles hardly impinged on their consciousness of what was important to their daily lives whether they or their daughters worked in the fields or not. With only very limited access to the thinking of working people (185) the argument must remain highly speculative as we can only glimpse behind the stereotypes to guess at the extent to which domestic ideologies and values of 'respectability' were internalised, adhered to or ignored. What is striking about the situation in Norfolk and Suffolk, however, is the failure of employer hegemony. For, whether coercive or paternalistic in their approach, the employers singularly failed to win the hearts and minds of both the men and women of the rural working classes in any common identification of interests. Active and covert resistance may have been suppressed and subdued, but in their exodus from rural society labouring people were voting with their feet against oppression and against the 'grandmotherly control' implicit in paternalistic benevolence. (186) As a Docking Unionist

was to say in the later flare ups of class antagonism in the 1870s, the leaders of rural society "... have been crushing us ever since we left Paradise. They got us down - feet, legs, hands, arms and shoulders". (187). Dependence was enforced, even a degree of deference, but in their denial and subordination of the patriarchal status and authority of the working-class male under the weight of economic oppression, and in the failure to maintain a match between family values and the organisation of labour, the farming classes knocked away the fundamental lynch pins of social and cultural hegemony. The Duke of Newcastle's observation about the importance of 'the stake in the hedge' was more shrewd than probably he realised. By the 1860s, a small improvement in the economic position of labouring families was allowing some element of choice in the way men and women organised their lives and we see, almost by default, some restoration of the family values of rural people, and of masculine (and feminine) self esteem and independence. But, just as the labourers cried to the firemen, it was 'too late, too late' and also too little. Alienation had gone too far.



## Conclusions

In exploring the employment and family lives of working-class women in the cotton textile districts of Lancashire and the agricultural regions of Norfolk and Suffolk, the chapter has continued themes introduced earlier in an exploration of ways in which gender divisions were utilised and extended in pursuit of sectional interests towards the achievement of a broad-based patriarchal consensus within reformism in the post 1850 period. Though with fairly basic differences of interpretation and argument, there is a fundamental agreement with Joyce's thesis that the success of employer hegemony in Lancashire lay, not through the imposition from above of a cultural uniformity, but in the retention of traditional (in my argument, patriarchal) authority which "grew out of the centre of people's lives". (188)

This argument is also supported by the very different developments in Norfolk and Suffolk where, in a genuine class-based struggle which did not take an overtly gendered form, the failure of hegemony lay in the failure to safeguard the family values and 'cultural pre-conditions' of the working-class family. Gender divisions of labour were retained in the workplace, but the organisation of family life

was disrupted beyond the bounds of what was bearable and economic oppression tore away all shreds of masculine self respect derived from 'honourable' labour. As Joyce has argued,

No form of class hegemony is reducible to mere social control. Rather than the imposition of cultural uniformity from above, such situations always involve mutual constraints, boundaries beyond which neither side can trespass if the social relationship in question is to remain viable". (189)

In seeking to impose control - even when making concessions to the material welfare of the people - the ruling classes of rural society simply trespassed beyond the boundaries of what was acceptable, in denying the values at the centre of the family life of working people. Working-class patriarchy was denied and alienation and antagonism was the result.

It remains in the next two chapters to explore how the changing purposes and practices of education reflected such developments and divisions.

## Notes

1. Chartism continued through the 1850s, but 1848 marks its effective peak. Kirk, op.cit., p.3.
2. The Webbs first suggested that 1850 marks a 'watershed' in class relations and there has been considerable interest among historians as to the "key(s) to change and continuity" in the post-1850 period. The arguments of the main contributors to this debate are summarised in ibid, pp.1-31.
3. Ibid, p.2.
4. Hall, C., op.cit., p.25.
5. Moorehouse suggested:  
     if quiescent attitudes and behaviours are not directly linked to some particular stratum in the working class then the search for the roots of reformism can evolve into the much wider, and infinitely more difficult, question of the development, negotiation and constant renegotiation of culture, of the myriad processes of social control and so on.  
     Moorehouse, H.F., 'The Marxist Theory of the Labour Aristocracy', Social History, 3, no. 1, 1978, p.73. Although this study makes no claim directly to address issues of reformism as such, it is concerned with issues that are central to the debate. Joyce, in particular, has argued the significance of 'family values' and paternal authority in the restoration of equilibrium in social relations. Joyce, op.cit.
6. Though less than half those employed in textiles were working in factories in 1851. Best, G., Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-1871, London, 1971, 1979 edition, p.126.
7. Power loom weaving largely superseded hand weaving in south Lancashire around 1835, and in the north of the county in the 1840s. Kirk, op.cit., p.77, n.26; Joyce, op.cit., p.57.
8. Best, op.cit., p.126.
9. The 1833 Commissioners predicted:  
     By many others it was stated that the restriction of the hours of female labour would compel the mothers of families to work in the mills; a consequence which is

much deprecated as extremely mischievous.  
Quoted by Hewitt, op.cit., p.12.

10. The proportion of adult women in the factories fell to 57.2 per cent by 1861. Hewitt, ibid. Women were not differentiated by marital status in census returns before 1901.
11. Deputation to Sir Robert Peel, 'The Ten Hours Factory Question', in Hollis, P., Women in Public: The Women's Movement 1850-1900, London, 1979, p.76.
12. Ten Hours Advocate, quoted by Smelser, op.cit., p.301.
13. Manchester and Salford Advertiser, 18/1/1842, quoted by Hewitt, op.cit., pp.23-4.
14. Ibid, p.183.
15. Ibid, p.10.
16. Henriques, op.cit., pp.102-7; Kirk, op.cit., p.247.
17. A statutory 10½ hour day for all workers was achieved in 1853, thus effectively ending relay evasions.
18. More humanitarian manufacturers, for example, were conscious of the need to limit competition from more exploitive manufacturers. Tory politicians expressed their dissatisfaction with Peel's reform of the corn laws by voting for the 1847 legislation, and the Christian Socialists saw support for factory reform as a means of furthering a Tory/working class alliance. Henriques, op.cit., pp.67, 112; Perkin, op.cit., p.363.
19. Perkin, op.cit., p.268.
20. Henriques, op.cit., p.259.
21. Report from Commissioners on the State of the Handloom Weavers, P.P. 1840, XXIV, p.44.
22. Report of Commissioners on Children's Employment in the Mines, P.P. 1842, XVI, p.12.
23. Halevey, E., England in 1815, London, 1949 edition, p.585.



24. Hall, C., 'The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology', in Burman, S., (Ed.), Fit Work for Women, London, 1979, pp.15-16.
25. Hannah More, 1777, quoted by ibid, p.25.
26. Ibid, p.26.
27. Perkin, op.cit., pp.276, 263.
28. Halevey distinguished the relative contributions of the Evangelicals and Utilitarians to social reform:  
     As their contribution to the common task the Christians brought their zeal, their missionary spirit, their love for a self-imposed discipline ... The Utilitarians contributed their practical sense, their conviction of the possibility of a social technique, an art of employing the right means to obtain desired ends.  
     Halevey, op.cit., p.586.
29. Henriques, op.cit., pp.260-262.
30. Bentham's suggested procedures for dealing with social problems were 'Report, Legislation, Administration, Inspection'. Perkin, op.cit., p.269.
31. The Evangelicals did not see the employment of working-class women as being undesirable in itself. Domestic service, needlework, teaching, etc., all employments in keeping with the domestic and private world of women, were entirely suitable occupations. Factory work, being 'public', was not suitable work for women. As Alexander has commented,  
     There was not much to choose - if our criteria is risk to life or health - between work in the mines, and work in the London dress-making trades. But no one suggested that needlework should be forbidden to women.  
     Alexander, 'London', p.63.
32. Taylor, op.cit., p.112.
33. Mr. Ferrand estimated that the combination of factory work and domestic chores left women only "six and a half hours for recreation, seeing and visiting friends and sleep" in any one day. Hansard, 1844, quoted by Hewitt, op.cit., p.22.

34. Foster, J., Class Struggle and the Industrial Union: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three English Towns, London, 1974, p.92.
35. Barlee, E., A Visit to Lancashire in December 1862, in Hewitt, op.cit., p.67.
36. Men with low wages and/or large families also preferred longer hours. Reports of the Factory Inspectors, P.P. 1849, XXII, p.144. For a detailed breakdown of Horner's findings see Smelser, op.cit., pp.304-6.
37. Hall, 'Working-Class Family', p.25.
38. Many writers have pointed to the incompatibility of such ideals with the exigencies of working-class life (see, for example, Roberts, E., op.cit., pp.24-5), but with the implication that this was a factor of the ignorance or obtuseness of middle-class observers. As far as I am aware, there has been no discussion of the issues raised here, though Rose does raise some related questions and Brenner and Ramas have discussed some of the theoretical issues involved. Rose, S., 'Gender at Work: Sex, Class and Industrial Capitalism', History Workshop, Issue 21, Spring 1986, pp.127-8, 131 n.91.
39. Hartmann suggests that men were motivated by a desire to retain their wife's services at home. Hartmann, op.cit., p.201. Hutchins and Harrison argued that male workers were fighting "from behind the women's petticoats" in their struggles against the state and their employers. Hutchins, B., and Harrison, A., A History of Factory Legislation, London, 1911, 1926 edition, p.65.
40. Kirk, op.cit., p.67. Turner, for example, suggests that post-1850 unionism underwent a "reconciliation with the new order" which expressed itself in "attempts to adapt it to their needs rather than to overthrow it". Ibid, p.242.
41. Smiles, S., Industrial Biography, quoted by Smelser, op.cit., p.126.
42. Friefield, op.cit., p.336.
43. In 1824, during the course of a long dispute, several manufacturers approached Richard Roberts and asked him to develop a machine that would free them from the control the spinners' skills

gave them over production. Invented in 1825, for a number of reasons the self-acting mule was not widely used before the 1840s. Ibid. The use of the quadrant nut removed, in theory, the need for the complex and arduous adjustments necessary to operate the hand mules. Ibid., p.324.

44. Doherty, for example, founded a Society for the Protection of Children Employed in Cotton Factories and led a vigorous campaign against manufacturers evading the time restrictions placed on child labour in 1819 and 1825. Henriques, op.cit., p.71-2.
45. Quoted by Henriques, op.cit., p.81-2.
46. Hunt, E., British Labour History 1815-1914, London, 1981, p.24.
47. Kirk, op.cit., p.271.
48. Hobsbawm, E., 'Custom, Wages and Workload', in Labouring Men, London, 1968, pp.345, 347.
49. Kirk, op.cit., p.276-7. Somewhat paradoxically, this had the ultimate effect of strengthening the spinners' bargaining position, as the employers had less to fear from them.
50. This point, argued convincingly by Friefield, casts a new light on the accepted view of the spinners as 'contrived aristocrats' of labour. Friefield, op.cit., pp.325-7.
51. Ibid.
52. Kirk, op.cit., p.277.
53. The extensive debate on the factors underlying the spinners' status and authority is summarised in Friefield, op.cit., p.277.
54. Kirk, ibid.
55. Lazonick, W., The Subjection of Labour to Capital: The Rise of the Capitalist System, London, 1978, p.9.
56. Barrett, M., and Mc.Intosh, M., 'The Family Wage', in Whitelegg, E., et al, op.cit., p.73-4; Hartmann, op.cit., p.201.



57. Thompson, E.P., 'The Politics of Theory', in Samuel, R., (Ed.), People's History and Socialist Theory, London, 1981, pp.405-6.
58. See, for example, Hobsbawm's discussion of the reasons for, and values of, sectional unionism. Hobsbawm, op.cit., p.322-323.
59. One might wish that the spinners had not pursued sectional unionism and strategies of opposition to women's employment. To imply, however, as do Barrett and Mc.Intosh, that their actions were a consequence of straightforward choice is to misunderstand the historical context in which those strategies were pursued and as the people concerned understood it. Barrett and Mc.Intosh, ibid.
60. Pleck, in Lown, op.cit., p.32.
61. Alexander, S., 'Women, Class and Sexual Difference: Some Reflections on the Writing of Feminist History', History Workshop, 17, Spring 1984, p.137. Rose also explores issues of "male personal identity intricately woven from pride in skill and family headship". Rose, op.cit., p.125.
62. Seccombe, op.cit., p.58.
63. Though there were those (Hickson of the Handloom Weavers Commission, Marx and Engels) who recognised the longer-term benefits of gender equality in the labour market. See chapter 2.
64. Roberts, E., op.cit., p.59-60. The Blackburn standard list ('the cotton operatives charter'), laid down standard rates for spinners and other operatives in addition to those for weavers, and also included a disputes reconciliation procedure. It was not, however, universally accepted across the cotton districts. Kirk, op.cit., pp.304 n.59, 289-90.
65. Quoted by Liddington and Norris, op.cit., p.53.
66. Extensive reading has yielded no further evidence beyond this frequently quoted remark of Mrs. Fletcher.
67. Seccombe, op.cit., p.68.
68. Quoted by John, A., By the Sweat of their Brow, London, 1980, p.57.



69. Seccombe, ibid, p.73.
70. Benenson, H., in Rose, op.cit., p.124.
71. Alexander, 'Women, Class', pp.134, 136, 138, 140.
72. Benenson, ibid.
73. Kirk, op.cit., p.88.
74. Kirk, ibid, pp.100, 103. As Joyce has said, working people had "a clear notion of bad times gone and better times on the way". Joyce, op.cit., p.59.
75. Wood recorded average increases of 13 per cent in the money earnings of cotton workers between 1850 and 1860, and of 17 per cent between 1860 and 1874. Mitchell and Deane calculated advances in real wages as 14 per cent between 1850 and 1860 and 22 per cent between 1860 and 1874. Not all working people shared equally in this relative improvement, with substantial differences between geographical regions, different occupational groups, different employers and with large and increasing differentials between the earnings of male spinners and predominantly female weavers. Kirk, ibid, p.37; Hobsbawm, op.cit., p.292. For a discussion of different conditions in rural and urban areas, see Hubermann, M., 'The Economic Origins of Paternalism: Lancashire Cotton Spinning in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', Social History, 12, no.2, May 1987, pp.177-192.
76. Hartmann, op.cit., p.202.
77. Horner, 1858, quoted by Kirk, ibid, p.247.
78. This was the argument of the Manchester Free Labour Society, established in 1869 by leading manufacturers, merchants and magistrates. Kirk, ibid, p.270.
79. Bendix, in Dutton, H.I., and King, J.E., 'The Limits of Paternalism: The Cotton Tyrants of North Lancashire 1836-1854', Social History, 7, no.1, January 1982, p.63-4.
80. In arguing that the reconstitution of the cotton workers' family unit and the 'paternal' authority of the male workforce was a crucial element in the paternalist policies of some Lancashire

manufacturers, Joyce has put his finger on one of the key constituents of post-1850 reformism, though his explanation of the process of accommodation is ultimately unsatisfactory. His later admission, that he had probably over emphasised the degree of internalisation on the part of the workforce of the paternalistic ethos, and that the relationship between employers and workers was reciprocal, with "an implicit social contract" being arrived at "in a terrain of compromise", points to negotiation as a means of achieving accommodation, as in my argument here. Joyce, P. 'Labour, Capital and Compromise: A Response to Richard Price', Social History, 9, no.2, May 1984, p.225.

For criticisms of Joyce's theory that paternalism was used to buttress the authority structures of industrial society, see Kirk, op.cit., p.14-24; Dutton and King, ibid.; Price, R., 'The Labour Process and Labour History', Social History, 8, no.1, January, 1983; Price, R., 'Conflict and Co-operation: A Reply to Patrick Joyce', Social History, 9, no.2, May 1984,; Hubermann, op.cit., p.178.

81. This argument accepts the conclusions drawn by Kirk, op.cit., p.300-1.
82. Kirk, op.cit., p.283. Their strategic position in production (cotton could not be woven before it was spun) also strengthened their position. Ibid, p.280. There was also a continuing need for their technical expertise. Friefield, op.cit., pp.325-8.
83. Kirk, op.cit., pp.276-80, 283-6. Other concessions (libraries, treats, housing, schools, pensions etc.) are listed by Kirk and Joyce. Ibid, pp.292-6; Joyce, pp.97, 120, 170ff.
84. Kirk, ibid, pp.245, 253.
85. Best defines respectability as "the adoption of a style of living understood to show a proper respect for morals and morality". Best, op.cit., p.279-80.
86. According to Wood, self-actor spinners earned 21s.9d. on average in 1850, rising to 24s.3d. in 1860 and 30s. in 1871. The average wages of all spinners in Manchester were 21s.10d. in 1850, 24s.4d. in 1860, 28s.6d. in 1870. Averages conceal considerable variations of course, but, in general, spinning wages were sufficient to

provide the 3s. per adult per week (excluding rent) that Brotherton of the Manchester and Salford Education Aid Society estimated was sufficient for subsistence. An estimated budget, based on Brotherton's subsistence costs, Bowley's scale of consumption and Foster's estimates of rent and fuel costs in Oldham in 1849, though very crude, supports this point.

		£.	s.	d.
adult male	]		3	0
" female	]	food	2	5
child 5-14	]	costs	1	6
child 0-5	]		1	0
		fuel	1	6
		rent	2	9
		clothing*	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
			14	2

\*calculated on a basis of 3x Bowley's estimate for an adult male at 1849 prices.

Asssuming average wage levels, this budget leaves a surplus of 7s 8d in 1850 and 10s 2d. in 1860 to pay for union dues, school pence, savings, better food etc.

A more generous budget, based on Rowntree's scale of consumption still leaves a surplus of 7s. 7d. at 1860 wage levels.

Kirk, op.cit., p.105; Foster, op.cit., pp.25-29; Perkin, op.cit., p.423; Anderson, op.cit., pp.30-2, 128.

87. Joyce, op.cit., p.109.

88. Liddington and Norris suggest that in the spinning districts most women left the mills when they married or when their first child was born, but that the factory work of married women and mothers was commonplace in the weaving towns. Liddington and Norris, op.cit., p.58-9.

89. Weaving wages were higher in south Lancashire in 1841-5 because of a shortage of female and juvenile labour. The situation altered as weaving moved to the north of the county from the 1850s, as the wages paid to women for preparatory work in the spinning factories were lower than those paid to weavers, though still higher than those paid for other work.

Foster suggests that the shortage of female and juvenile labour was a key factor in the shift of weaving to the north. He attributes this to a small number of female immigrants to south



Lancashire. A shift away from factory work on the part of spinners' wives offers an alternative explanation for this.

Liddington and Norris, ibid; Foster, op.cit., pp.230, 239 n.82; Anderson, op.cit., pp.72-4; Kirk, op.cit., p.37.

90. A number of 'respectable' money earning alternatives (child minding, sewing, lodgers etc) were still available to spinners' wives, and children, particularly boys, might work in the factory. Anderson, ibid, pp.47, 141 ; Foster, ibid, p.96-7; Liddington and Norris, ibid, p.60; Hewitt, op.cit., p.64.
91. The fiercely competitive conditions in Blackburn did encourage negotiation, hence the achievement of the Blackburn list. Kirk, op.cit., p. 289-90.
92. Ibid.
93. The majority of 'paternalist' employers identified by Joyce were located in the south of the county, where spinning was predominant from the 1850s. Dutton and King have argued that paternalism was exceptional in the north, particularly in Blackburn and Preston, in the period 1836-1854. An "element of continuing antagonism" in Ashton and Stalybridge is largely attributed by Joyce to the retention of a sizeable weaving sector without viable unions. Joyce, 'Work, Society', pp.60, 158-201; Dutton and King, op.cit., p.61; Kirk, op.cit., pp.184-5.
94. Many questions are raised about issues of gender, skills, union policies and strategies in the relationships between the weavers and their employers. Joyce, op.cit., p.66; Liddington and Norris, op.cit., p.84.
95. Average weekly wages for weavers were 11s. in 1850, 12s.6d. in 1850, 12s. 6d. in 1860 and 14s. in 1871. Kirk, op.cit., p.93.
96. Liddington and Norris, op.cit., p.58.
97. Roberts, E., op.cit., p.35. Joyce attributes 'driving' to female "acquiescence". Joyce, op.cit., p.114.
98. Webb, B., and Webb, S., Industrial Democracy, London, 1897, in Liddington and Norris, op.cit., p.272 n.33. Hunt argues that more frequent female absences and lower production rates, as well as



'natural' differences were contributory in determining earnings. Hunt, op.cit., p.103. Drake argued that equal pay prevailed. Drake, B, Women in Trade Unions, 1920, in ibid. Bornatt argues the same inequalities for Yorkshire weavers. Bornatt, J., 'Lost Leaders: Women, Trade Unionism and the Case of the General Union of Textile Workers' in John, A., (ed.), op.cit., p.209-10.

99. Drake, op.cit., 1984 edition, p.61-2. Though see Liddington and Norris for an account of female union activities in the 1880s. Liddington and Norris, op.cit., pp.95-6, 216-7.
100. Joyce, op.cit., p.113.
101. Ibid. By the end of the century, according to Burnett, "full respectability" no longer permitted the employed wife. The working wife had become "an indication of her husband's inability to maintain his family". Burnett, 'Destiny Obscure', p.219.
102. Ibid., p.218.
103. Men may have 'helped' with housework, but mention of this is rare in autobiography. In turn of the century Howarth, for example, keeping the exterior of the house clean was defined as 'men's work'. John, A., (ed.), op.cit., p.2; Burnett, ibid., p.219. Women had the responsibility for household budgeting, demonstrating their respectable independence by the careful match of expenditure to income. Best, op.cit., p.279-80.
104. It is likely that patriarchal authority within the family was more important to unskilled and low paid male workers, because of their inability to earn a 'breadwinner' wage. See, for example, Tones, N., 'A Torrent of Abuse: Crimes of Violence Between Working-Class Men and Women in London 1840-1875', Journal of Social History, vol.2, no.2, 1978, pp.322.
105. State interests were served by both 'new' and 'traditional' patriarchy, not least in devolving responsibilities for many of the problems of the working-classes on to the 'deficiencies' of the working-class wife and mother. When combined with the tenets of political economy, patriarchal ideologies could further absolve the state from responsibility for working-class poverty. Men were at liberty to sell their labour at any

price they chose, and if they chose to sell it at a price which disallowed the adequate maintenance of a wife and family, that too was their choice. Women and children 'ought' to be supported by husbands and fathers and not by the state.

106. Jane Humphries has argued that the ideology of the male breadwinner wage was a strategy adopted by both men and women against exploitation. Though disagreeing strongly with her conclusion that the male breadwinner wage was based on a correct perception of the material advantages it offered to the working classes, it is likely that men and women perceived this to be the case. Barrett and McIntosh, op.cit., p.79; Roberts, E., op.cit., p.25.
107. Thompson, D., 'Women and Nineteenth-century Radical Politics: A Lost Dimension', in Mitchell and Oakley (Eds.), op.cit., p.79. Women played a less active role in 'public' activities such as unionism and politics after the 1840s for a whole variety of reasons. Thompson, ibid; Roberts, E., op.cit., p.58-9; Liddington and Norris, op.cit., p.216-7.
108. Thompson, D., The Chartists, Hounslow, 1984, p.149-50.
109. Gray, op.cit., p.39.
110. Engels was of the opinion that only around half the women working in Manchester cotton factories were married to factory workers. Hewitt calculated 36.56 per cent of female cotton factory workers married to non-factory workers or living apart from their husbands in 1851, and 37.78 per cent in 1851. The 1893 Royal Commission on Labour concluded that around half the married female factory workforce were married to factory workers and, in Oldham, half were married to men in irregular occupations such as construction. Tilly and Scott, op.cit., p.31; Hewitt, op.cit., p.192-3. One in six of the female factory workers in Halstead in Essex were supporting families. Lown, op.cit., p.43.
111. Liddington and Norris, op.cit., p.50; Anderson, op.cit., p.201 n.30.
112. Women in the blowing and carding rooms earned around 9s. per week in 1850, 9s.6d. in 1860,

13s. in 1871 and those in the winding room got very little more. Kirk, op.cit., p.146. Male weavers, paid on the same rates as the women overall though earning more, were badly paid in comparison with male earnings elsewhere. Hunt, op.cit., p.103.

113. He said,  
A man thinks himself badly off if he cannot earn more than 17s. a week. It is no exaggeration to say that there are thousands of girls in Manchester who think themselves lucky if they bring home 7s. at the weekend, and older and skilled women who can never hope to earn more than 12s. ... These are surely the wages of the poorest poor. These workers are living very near subsistence level.  
Liddington and Norris, op.cit., p.36.
114. Roberts, E., op.cit. She cites a Board of Trade Report for 1908 which showed average labouring wages in the building and engineering trades were lower in the textile towns of Lancashire than in the non textile towns. The Pilgrim Trust reported in the inter-war years that men's wages in the textile towns had always been fixed at a lower rate, with the assumption that they would be 'supplemented' by the earnings of wives.
115. Seccombe, op.cit., p.59.
116. Mary Merryweather, Experiences of Factory Life, London, 1862, p.19. Also see Anderson, op.cit., p.77.
117. This may have been a further incentive for a move away from paid work.
118. The Pioneer, 22/3/1834, in Taylor, op.cit., p.100.
119. Wives were often ignorant about the level of their husband's earnings. See, for example, P.P. 1833, XX, D1, p.39.  
A chief cause of secondary poverty seems to have been the practice of a husband keeping a large part of his wages for his personal use. Hunt, op.cit., p.124.
120. Kirk, op.cit., pp.216, 28.
121. Royston-Pike, E., Human Documents of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, London, 1966,



- p.235. This was consistent with the Evangelical view of the moral role of women.
122. Kirk, op.cit., p.213.
  123. Ibid., p.212. This whole section draws heavily on Kirk's discussion of Lancashire respectability. Ibid., pp.207-20.
  124. Liddington and Norris, op.cit., p.61.
  125. Joyce argues,  
         The re-establishment of the family economy of the operatives is thus to be understood as carrying with it a wider acceptance of the relationship of master and operative, the dimensions of which have to be sought in the workings of neighbourhood life and the sense of community itself.  
         Joyce, op.cit., p.xx.  
         My argument places a different emphasis, with the mellowing of relationships between master and male operative being related to the negotiated establishment of forms of family organisation compatible with patriarchal values and the organisation of production, the dimensions of which were evident in the workings of community life.
  126. Barlee, 1862 in Hewitt, op.cit., p.67.
  127. Westminster Review, quoted by Roberts, R., op.cit., p.182.
  128. Digby, A., Pauper Palaces, p.224-5.
  129. Jones, D., op.cit., p.33. Rule draws on Well's discussion of rural protest to define much rural crime as protest reaction against their conditions of life and work. Rule, op.cit., p.354.
  130. A less overtly hostile expression of alienation was the rapid spread of Baptist and Methodist allegiance in the region from the 1830s. Jones, op.cit., p.p.35, 39, 43; Digby, op.cit., p.27. Sectarian rivalry was a spur to Anglican efforts in the establishment of schools.
  131. Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act, P.P. 1837-8, XVIII.2, p.355.
  132. Quoted by Snell, op.cit., p.122.



133. Jones, op.cit., p.42.
134. Ibid, p.41. Glyde described 1844, the peak year of incendiarism, as being one of "intense alarm", with fires "fd almost nightly occurance". Glyde, op.cit., p.126.
135. The immediate catalyst to the events of 1843-4 was agricultural depression, with consequent wage cuts, dismissal etc. Jones quotes many examples of threatening letters, illustrating the extent of the labourers' poverty and grievances. Jones, op.cit., pp.42, 46, 48-9, 55.
136. Ibid, pp.30, 50.
137. Ibid, p.37.
138. Report on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, p.233;
139. Jones, op.cit., pp.37, 43.
140. Snell, op.cit., pp.126-7, 130;
141. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.85. See chapter 8 for the effect on the school attendance of boys.
142. For details of Higgs' calculations of the numbers of women employed in various sections of the economy between 1841 and 1891 see Higgs, E., 'Women, Occupation and Work in the Nineteenth Century', History Workshop, Spring 1987, pp.58-79.  
Miller also argues a substantial 'hidden workforce' of female agricultural workers. Miller, C., 'The Hidden Workforce: Female Field Workers in Gloucestershire in the Late Nineteenth Century', Southern History, 6, 1984, pp.139-155.
143. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.93-4.
144. P.P. 1843 XII, p.227. Much of this work was seasonal, as discussed in chapter 3.
145. Women earned around 8d. per day, but with variations according to whether they were casual or regular workers, employed individually or in a family group, the hours worked, on task or piecework rates etc. Women in gangs earned around 8d. to 9d. per day but might be paid partly in truck goods. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.94.

Some outwork was available (straw plait and slop work) but at very low rates of pay.

146. P.P. 1843 XII, p.25-6.
147. Ibid, p.27.
148. Ibid.
149. Ibid, p.225-6
150. Quoted by Jones, op.cit., p.52.
151. Ibid, pp.52-3, 215 n.44.
152. These were satirised by Hood: "A Bible says one; a Reading Made Easy says another - a Temperance Medal says another - or maybe a Hagricultural prize. But what is he to eat, I ax?" Quoted by Jones, op.cit, p.59.
153. Dissenters could be considered 'undeserving'. Horn, op.cit., p.233.
154. Prizes were also given to labourers bringing up families without recourse to relief. Digby, op.cit., p.26.
155. Report from the Select Committee on the Labouring Poor (allotments of land). P.P. 1843 VII, p.iv. The holding of allotments was often subject to other controls, regulating the behaviour of working people. Horn, ibid, p.142-3.
156. Roberts, D., op.cit., p.132-3.
157. The Labourers' Friend Society was an Evangelical pressure group formed in 1830 as an association for providing labourers with land. Henriques, op.cit., p.241. It is likely that Evangelical views on the roles of women within the family informed this perception of the value of allotments.
158. Glyde, op.cit., p.331.
159. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.99.
160. P.P. 1843 XII, p.143.
161. Springall, L.M., Labouring Life in Norfolk Villages 1834-1913, 1936, p.40; Digby, op.cit., p.26.

162. Anderson suggests that "boys (who were better paid and potentially more independent) were more likely to leave home and renounce familial obligations than were girls". He suggests an instrumental orientation to parent-child relationships in Preston, with children staying at home when the situation was favourable to both parties. Anderson, op.cit., pp.124-135.
163. Other factors also came into play; accomodation was hard to find, migration difficult etc. Snell, op.cit., p.326.
164. Thompson, F., Lark Rise To Candleford, 1976 edition, pp.155, 166.
165. Snell, op.cit., p.326-7.
166. Some examples of the occupational dstinations of Suffolk girls are given in chapter 8.
167. Glyde, op.cit., p.59.
168. Glyde, J., The Moral, Social and Religious Condition of Ipswich, Ipswich and London, 1850. p.70. Census returns show 40.3 per cent of occupied women in service in 1851, 43.4 per cent in 1861 and 46.4 per cent in 1861. Higgs' revised figures puts the number of women and girls in service considerably lower, but still show the same upward trend. He suggests 17.9 per cent in service in 1851, 20 per cent in 1861, and 21.7 per cent in 1871. Higgs, op.cit., p.75.
169. Snell, op.cit., p.327-8.
170. Hunt, op.cit., p.106-7. Higgs suggests that when board and lodging is taken into account, servants' incomes were generally superior to those of women working in the cotton factories. Higgs, E., 'Domestic Servants and Household Production' in John, A., (ed.), op.cit., p.138.
171. Digby, op.cit., p.17.
172. Horn, op.cit., p.228.
173. Hunt, op.cit., p.155. Glyde, Suffolk, p.55.
174. Horn, op.cit., p.246.
175. Charlesworth, op.cit., p.163.

176. Report of the Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture, P.P. 1867-8 XVII, p.17.
177. P.P. 1868-9 XIII, p.54.
178. P.P. 1867-8 XVII, pp.16-17.
179. P.P. 1868-9 XIII, p.80.
180. 35.6% (Norfolk), 34.2% (Suffolk) in 1871. Stephens, op.cit., p.319.
181. It may have been that restrictions on the employment of children from the 1870s led to a corresponding increase in the employment of married women, though this would not necessarily be evident in census returns. Also, the enforcement of school attendance was notoriously poor in country districts.
182. Pinchbeck, op.cit., p.110. Horn, op.cit., p.243.
183. P.P. 1868-9 XII, p.54.
184. P.P. 1867-8 XVII, appendix, p.198.
185. Illiteracy and poverty created more serious barriers to autobiography in these regions than they would have done in the industrial regions, for example and there is very little evidence for this period.
186. Jones, op.cit., p.60.
187. Quoted by ibid, p.61.
188. Joyce, op.cit., p.xvii.
189. Ibid, p.xvi.



Education for the Working Classes: purposes and provision after the later 1830s.

Critical appraisal of the ideologies that had informed the early impetus towards the provision of mass schooling as a vehicle for social reform and control in the 1820s was followed in the 1830s and after by what Richard Johnson has suggested was "a real change of gear" in the provision and purposes of schooling for the working classes. This was marked by a period of sustained growth in provision, the building of the infrastructure of the education system and the development of a more explicit identification of mass schooling as a medium for 'class-cultural transformation'. (1)

Given the different interpretations and emphases implicit within the reformist rationale of the earlier period, and the changes in attitudes regarding the socio-economic roles of working-class women evident in this later period, it is not surprising that the implications of these changes in gear were not the same for girls as for boys. Both sexes benefited from the expansion in school provision that took place in the 1840s and 1850s but access to formal schooling continued to be differentiated by gender-based assumptions and divisions of labour, generally - but not universally

- to the detriment of girls. Both sexes were seen to exhibit the 'vice' and 'irrationality' that made the reforming influence of education so vital, but diagnoses of the nature of that 'vice' and prescriptions for its alleviation were also informed by gender-based assumptions and divisions of labour. The purposes of 'class-cultural transformation', therefore, translated into educational policies which sharply differentiated between the nature of the education thought to be appropriate to the two sexes.

This is to generalise; continuing reliance on local and voluntary agencies, the somewhat ad hoc development of the educational apparatus of the state, divisions and conflicts within government, and, perhaps most importantly, variations and shifts in popular demand for schooling make it difficult to identify general trends without considerable qualification. Nevertheless, following Johnson, (2) it is possible - and fruitful - to identify 'expert' educational theories which informed, albeit "with stealth", (3) the policies of the Committee of Council under the management of Kay-Shuttleworth and his successors, and which, via the payment of grants and the advice of the Inspectorate, influenced the course and direction of provided schooling.

The chapter follows a very similar format to that adopted in chapter 3, with the same questions: what

were the purposes of schooling? how did these translate into policies? providing the basic framework to the discussion and with the same emphasis on broad issues relating to girls' access to schooling and education. Again, the chapter is complementary to the following discussion of girls' educational experiences in chapter 7, where issues relating to curriculum and daily attendance are considered.

### The Purposes of Elementary Schooling

The theme of education as a means of social control continued to be central to educational debates in the 1830s and 1840s though with a less repressive, more creative concept of the sort of education most likely to create the harmonious social and political relations between the working classes and their social superiors that were sought. Against the arguments that educating the working classes had actually increased crime and sedition, (4) educational 'experts' from the ranks of Whig and Radical politicians and of 'professional' social reformers put forward theories which saw the goal of education as primarily that of "changing and reforming the people". (5) If training the people in 'habits of obedience' had proved ineffective in

subduing working-class recalcitrance, educating them in 'correct' understanding of the economic and political ordering of society would lead them to abandon the 'perverted' and 'irrational' beliefs that were generating discontent. As a contributor to the Quarterly Journal of Education put the argument in 1831, an education confined to reading, religion and writing,

is incomplete and may, indeed, be perverted to the very worst purposes. They (working people) should, first of all, be made acquainted with the motives which have induced every society emerging from barbarism to establish the rights of property; and the advantages resulting from its establishment, and the necessity of maintaining it inviolate, should be clearly set forth ... The circumstances that give rise to those gradations of rank and fortune that actually exist ought also to be explained: it may be shown that they are as natural to society as differences of sex, of strength, or colour ... and that equality ... violently and unjustly brought about could not be maintained for a week. (6)

Implicit in such theories was the understanding that working-class dissatisfaction with the economic, social and political order was based on a profound misunderstanding of the fundamentally benign



operation of capitalist economic organisation. That periodic crises of capital accumulation caused slumps, unemployment and distress, that there were inequalities between social classes was unfortunate but inevitable. That industrial capitalism necessarily displaced workers with obsolete skills was also inevitable, and though the poverty experienced by these groups was deplorable in its immediate effects it was also an incentive for such men to "flee from the trade" and find alternative employment.(7) Many of the 'evils' associated with industrial capitalism were not inevitable, however, but arose from the ignorance and vice of the working people themselves. They were "in a great measure the architects of their own fortune"; poverty was frequently a consequence of their own "idleness, improvidence, and moral deviation" and disaffection was a product of their ignorant failure to understand "that mechanical inventions and discoveries are always supremely advantageous to them".(8) And if the problem was ignorance, the solution was education. "The radical remedy for these evils" argued Kay, "is such an education as shall teach the people in what consists their true happiness, and how their interests may be best promoted".(9)

The industrial and political ferment of the 1830s

and 1840s gave a particular urgency to these arguments. Alerted to the conditions prevailing in the industrial regions by the findings of the factory inquiries, throughout the 1830s public sensibilities were assaulted by continuing reminders of the failure to subdue the working classes or to capture their allegiance as riots followed strikes and mass demonstrations of popular discontent. And more seriously, the working classes were beginning to develop and pursue their own alternative economic, social and political policies which articulated a belief in the importance of productive labour as the only true source of wealth against the claims of capital. Through the trade unions, through Owenism and most particularly through the Chartist movement of the later 1830s and 1840s the working-classes were mounting an "overtly oppositional challenge" (10) against the state. In the 1830s, as Simon has summed up,

working-class organisations were becoming consolidated; they had already developed their own press, sponsored educational activities and were beginning to embark on independent political action. To give a suitable direction to working-class thinking had, therefore, become urgent ... Behind the working-class organisations there loomed the mass of the working people, open to disaffection, only too

prone to be misled. (11)

And, as the Chartist movement demonstrated, working people were only too ready to be so 'misled'. If direct repression had failed to subdue the working classes, if previous efforts to promote elementary education had achieved only very partial success and if attempts to capture the allegiance of adult male workers via the Mechanics' Institutes and publications of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge had been largely rejected, a much more comprehensive and sustained campaign to capture working-class allegiance had to be mounted.

The goal of reforming the working population through the education of their children and thereby legitimating the economic and political status quo through the achievement of cultural hegemony was central to the educational theories developed by 'experts' such as Kay-Shuttleworth. The purpose of mass education was to transmit and reproduce the dominant cultural values of the middle classes. Through the processes of schooling, the rules and routines of the hidden curriculum and the moral influence of the teachers, and through direct teaching of correct and useful knowledge, the schools were to inform the 'ignorant' working classes of the religious, moral, social and economic rules that governed society and convince them of the manifest

superiority of bourgeois values and behaviours over their own 'barbarous' cultural traditions. The schools alone could not achieve this transformation; they would operate in conjunction with the 'educative' pressures exerted by primary agencies such as the law, the forced 'lessons' of the new Poor Law and the 'indirect education' transmitted by the operation of capitalist economics, but education was crucial in ensuring that such lessons were 'correctly' learned and not misconstrued as pretexts for disaffection.(12) The time/work disciplines necessary for the efficient operation of industrial capitalism would be instilled, the fecklessness and 'vice' that was seen as a prime cause of working-class poverty would be eliminated, and the 'ignorant' misunderstanding of the laws of economics that underlay union agitation and political dissent would be replaced by a correct understanding of the universal benefits of industrial capitalism.

The correct education of working-class girls was seen to be particularly crucial to this process of cultural transformation. As the prime agent of cultural reproduction within the family it was vital that the working-class wife and mother should be properly educated so that she might transmit 'civilised' values and behaviours to her husband and children. It was, therefore, essential to provide



good schools for girls, because, as Inspector Norris expressed it, summing up a commonly held view,

as the girl is, so will the woman be; as the woman is, so will the home be; and as the home is, such for good or evil will be the character of our population. (13)

More immediately, the provision of a 'good' education for working-class girls would do much to eliminate the poverty and vice that was undermining the health of the working population and the peace of the social order. To quote Inspector Norris again,

Instead of that thriftless untidy woman who presides over it (the home) driving her husband to the gin palace by the discomfort of his own house and marring for life the health and temper of her child by her own want of sense, we must train up one who will be a cleanly careful housewife, and a patient skilful mother. Until one or two generations have been improved, we must trust mainly to our schools to effect this change in the daughters of the working-classes. (14)

The sheer inappropriateness of the bourgeois model of the civilised housewife to the material conditions of the industrial districts and rural Norfolk and Suffolk is evident, but rather than ignorance or lack of understanding, the purposes of girls' education as defined by middle-class educational theorists

demonstrate the consistent application of ideologically derived perceptions and prescriptions. For what must be borne in mind is that the so-called irrationality and ignorance of working people was seen as a prime cause of these material conditions - women were forced to work for wages, for example, because their domestic incompetence wasted family resources and drove their husbands to spend their earnings on drink. And if it was the failure of the working classes to adopt the attitudes of independence and self-help, the habits of frugality and industry and naturally ordained family roles and behaviours that caused poverty and social misery, then conversely, the working classes must be educated towards such values and behaviours before such problems could be alleviated. Working-class poverty was thus in itself an integral, if painful, part of the educative process, providing an 'education of circumstance' to be supplemented by the 'education of principle' taught in the schools.(15) From this perspective, the low wages paid to women workers were seen to be a positive force for good in that they taught women that their natural and proper place was in the home and not in the factory or fields. Dr. Mitchell of the Factory Inquiry Commission, for example, commented on the benignly educative force of economics in the following terms:

Some persons feel much regret at seeing the wages of females so low, in some cases full grown women averaging under 6s.; but perhaps such persons are wrong; and nature effects her own purposes more wisely and more effectually than could be done by the wisest of men. The low price of female labour makes it the most profitable as well as the most agreeable occupation for a female to superintend her own domestic establishment, and her low wages do not tempt her to abandon the care of her own children. Nature, therefore, thereby provides that her designs shall not be disappointed. (16)

This is not to deny the truth of Johnson's comment that "ingenious adaptations to crushing exigencies were not understood" and the advice given to the poor often highly inappropriate, (17) but to recognise the determining influence of cultural norms in defining 'civilised' versus 'uncivilised' behaviours - and the appropriate forms of education to inculcate desired standards. For if boys were to be transformed into 'civilised' workers and citizens by teaching them political economy, the process of civilising girls was to be achieved through teaching them domestic economy to make them good wives and mothers. Wives and mothers, that is, who did not neglect their families and their domestic responsibilities by going out to work. The rationale is illustrated by the

exchange between Lord Ashley and Kay in the Report of the Select Committee on the Education of the Poorer Classes of 1837-8. Lord Ashley began by asking Kay

Looking to education as a means of contributing to the comfort and order of society, are you not of the opinion that females of the poorer classes should acquire the various arts of domestic life as much as reading, writing and arithmetic?

Certainly, I think that the industrial instruction of females, and particularly their instruction in the arts of domestic economy, would contribute very greatly to the happiness of the poorer classes:

Is it consistent with your experience that the females of the operative classes, married or single, do possess this knowledge?

It is exceedingly lamentable that a very slender acquaintance with domestic economy is generally possessed among the poorer classes not only in the manufacturing, but also in the agricultural districts.

To what do you attribute this deficiency?

I attribute it, to a large extent, to the want of a proper system of instruction. I am also aware that the employment of females in many districts, does to a large extent interfere with their domestic



usefulness; and I think that employment which occasions this interference is to be greatly regretted.

Have you ever thought of any scheme to remedy this defect?

My view of a school is, that the objects which may legitimately sought to be attained in proceeding to develop a system of education for the poorer classes, would be improperly limited if the instruction of the females in domestic economy, particularly in frugal cookery, were omitted...

In your opinion then, any extensive employment of females, away from their homes, is injurious to their acquisition of the knowledge of the arts of domestic life?

I think that if the employment of females interferes with their early instruction in domestic economy, that is to be extremely regretted.(18)

The education of circumstance was, however, a slow process and in cases where the need for reform was seen to be urgent direct intervention was legitimated to accelerate class-cultural transformation - hence the imposition of compulsory schooling for children working in the major textile industries and of limitations on women's hours of work. A number of the evils of industrialisation were to be solved, in

theory at least, by the domestication of the women of Lancashire and West Yorkshire. Leonard Horner, the Inspector responsible for Lancashire factory schools, was quite explicit about what he considered to be the central purpose of educating young female factory workers. As he said in a Parliamentary report of 1834,

As the largest proportion of the children in factories are females, it is important that their peculiar wants should be attended to in the school arrangements. By the employment of young females all day in factories, they lose the opportunity of learning many domestic acquirements which are very necessary to make them good wives and mothers ... It is therefore part of my plan, that there should be a female assistant in the factory school, and that on three days in the week instruction shall be given in needlework. This, together with the opportunity that their restricted hours of factory work will afford of learning something of domestic duties at home in assisting their mothers, will remove to a great degree that disadvantage which has been found to attend the employment of females in factories.(19)

The goal of civilising the working classes through education did not exclude more immediately practical purposes, and for workhouse children, for whom some schooling was made compulsory under the 1834 Act,

vocational preparation was given high priority. As Assistant Poor Law Commissioner for Suffolk and Norfolk between 1835 and 1839 Kay was keenly interested in the education of this particular group of children, seeing it as "one of the most important means of eradicating the germ of pauperism from the rising generation, and of securing in the minds and morals of the people the best protection for the institutions of society".(20) This was to be achieved by training workhouse children "to habits of usefulness, industry and virtue" and in vocational skills which would enable them to earn a living when they left the workhouse, (21) thus giving children the skills to support an economic independence but ensuring that such independence did not overstep the boundaries of an appropriate deference to the social and economic status quo.

Continuing policies of non-intervention, religious sectarianism and the collapse of the Radicals as a concerted political group within Parliament meant that the National and British Societies continued as the main agencies for the provision of elementary education despite considerable pressure for the establishment of a comprehensive system of education under the guidance of the state.(22) Nevertheless, though conservatism and inertia inhibited change in the schools of both Societies - and particularly

those of the National Society (23) - the narrow concern to train the poor in habits of obedience and industry through the inculcation of religious and moral principles gradually widened towards a more liberal and secular view of education as a medium for social reform. Yet again, whether secular or religious in its conception, the purposes of girls' education translated into preparation for a domestic future. Thus the Rev. Edward Feild, inspector for the National Society argued the importance of educating girls in the following terms;

I cannot dismiss the subject of education in the manufacturing towns without again calling attention to the condition of the poor girls; ... especially in regard to the small number who are educated at all ... Nothing can be more distressing to the feeling mind than to consider the doom of poor girls, sent into the factory without any previous training of habit or thoughts,...., earning so much money as to make them, in a degree, independent of their parents and exposed to a 1,000 other snares and temptations ... Who can wonder of they grow up physically and morally depraved, that all the distinguishing virtues and excellencies of the female character are utterly obliterated? ... The apostolic system of female education (and we shall not improve it), is to 'teach the young women to be sober, to love their



husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed'.(24)

The British Society expressed a very similar view, though they warned against the dangers of limiting girls' education largely to domestic training.

The importance of female education is not yet fully estimated ... The mere acquisition of the art of needlework is not education, even though it should be accompanied by the ability to read or write. The friends of the poor ... forget the great majority of them (girls) will be mothers. Hence it not infrequently happens that girls leave school neat sempstresses, well acquainted with household duties, but at the same time with minds as uninformed, principles as unsettled, and hearts as vain and worldly as if they had never been brought under the influence of any moral or mental discipline whatever. Need it excite surprise that, when domesticated as wives and mothers, they should be found incapable of exchanging an idea with an intelligent artisan, prove as incompetent to govern as they are indisposed to submit and, - powerless to reclaim their partners from accustomed sensualities, or to win them from the haunts of evil companions, - should soon have to weep over a neglect, which has in great measure been induced by an emptiness and moral helplessness which equally incapacitates them for the

companionship of their husbands, or the government of their children.

The only remedy for an evil of this magnitude will be found in a thorough reform with regard to the economy of female schools. Needlework and household duties are too important to be neglected or despised; but they must not be allowed to interfere with moral and intellectual cultivation. If girls are to be trained with a view to becoming the wives and mothers of industrious and intelligent mechanics, their education must be less of the lip and the finger, and more of the heart; and if intelligent females of the middle and higher ranks continue to regard these important establishments with distrust, or persevere in withering them by their neglect, . . . a fearful retribution will assuredly follow, in the inevitable consequence of that universal corruption of manners which so invariably accompanies the debasement of the female sex, and which no other schemes of benevolence can ever effectually remove.(25)

Though this lengthy statement represents the view of a largely Nonconformist group, the influence of the Evangelical conception of the moral mission of women can clearly be seen. Females were naturally different from males; their sphere was the home and the family and not the public world of the factory or the field, and it was their duty to improve and sustain the moral qualities of their husbands and children as

well as their domestic needs. Women occupied, as Hall has described, " a key position in the struggle to reform and renew the nation", and women in the home provided "the revolutionary base from which their influence could shine forth". (26) Women were, in short, the lynch pin of the social and moral reform that was so urgently sought.

If working-class women were to be effective in this role of 'moral missionary', working-class girls had to be properly educated for the task of being a 'good' wife and mother. Ideally, this would be done in the home but as the majority of working-class mothers were clearly unable to fulfil this heavy responsibility, then schools and teachers must be provided as substitutes to teach girls their domestic and moral duties. And the educational process need not stop with schooling, for if girls were trained to be domestic servants their need to earn a living could be integrated with the further 'education' that contact with family life as it was lived by moral and 'civilised' people would confer. So, in immediate terms the purpose of girls' schooling was the production of girls with the skills, attitudes and behaviours that would make them good servants and good wives and mothers; in the longer term the purpose of their education was the cultural transformation of the whole working class and the

regeneration of the social order.

The purpose of educating working-class boys was the same - a whole wealth of class-cultural meaning was embedded in the concept of the 'industrious and intelligent mechanic' who was to be produced by the schools and he was clearly not one who embraced 'subversive' doctrines or questioned the social, economic and political status quo - but though the purposes of their education was essentially the same, the meaning, and the means of achieving, those purposes were radically different. Men and women were naturally different, their roles in society were different and their education should be designed to reflect and maintain those differences.

### The Local Dimension

'Expert' educational theories and the views of the Societies' inspectors and central committee members were, however, mediated by the views of local subscribers, and their perception of the purposes of educating boys and girls seem to have been rather more pragmatic. Further, despite continuing appeals by Kay-Shuttleworth (as Kay became on his marriage) and other supporters of mass education, there were many who continued to see schooling as a poor investment and were indifferent or hostile to such



claims on their purses. In practice, therefore, neither the provision of schooling nor the expressed purposes of educating the working classes matched the ideals put forward by 'expert' educationists or by the two Societies.

In Norfolk and Suffolk, for example, the continuing hostility of farmers, particularly against the education of boys, severely hampered efforts to provide schooling for children in rural districts. Many of the farmers were Dissenters, actively opposed to any extension of Anglican influence through expansion in the provision of Church schools, (27) and most saw no need for schooling as an instrument of socialisation. Since the swift and sharp repression of the Swing riots of 1830-1831, the agricultural workforce had shown little inclination towards concerted and overt protest and though rural incendiarism continued to cause problems, the continuing surplus of labour combined with the coercive operation of the 1834 Poor Law were seen to be sufficient to maintain the industry, deference and docility of the majority of workers.

And if education served no directly useful purpose, it was, as the farmers saw it, directly detrimental to their interests. It threatened the loss of boy labour, it threatened to give labourers ideas above their station and make them disinclined against

agricultural work, and, even worse, it might enable workers to seek jobs elsewhere and thus eliminate the labour surplus that gave the farmers the power to undercut wage levels and hire and fire with impunity. Even as late as the 1860s some farmers were still of the opinion that "it takes 3 educated men to do two ignorant men's work" because workers who had been to school were the most discontented, shifty, "the least inclined for drudgery, ..., fonder of reading the newspaper ... than of work, always on the look out for opportunities to better themselves".(28) Nor were such complaints confined to male workers. Though girls' schooling seems to have been regarded with indifference rather than active hostility by the farmers, complaints about 'over' education encouraging girls "to become housemaids, nursery maids, dressmakers etc." rather than dairymaids were general in East Anglia in the 1840s.(29) As Edward Twisleton, the poor law inspector for the eastern region remarked in 1840,

Small farmers and many of the gentry, have a decided repugnance to educating the poor ... No statement of moral or distant advantages will have much effect, unless a good argument to the pocket can be maintained. (30)

Conditions were often little better in the towns. Many had large and long-established schools but

others, like King's Lynn, were still very poorly provided with public schools in the 1840s, and provided education expanded only slowly in centres like Bury St. Edmunds, Ipswich, Norwich and Yarmouth through the 1840s to the 1860s. Indeed, in Norwich in particular, 'stagnation' continued until the mid 1860s because of limited public support.(31) The problem was chiefly one of a lack of resources, for while the Anglican church could supply sufficient enthusiasm for the establishment and support of schools across both counties, the diocesan societies simply could not raise sufficient money to do so. Subscriptions to the diocesan education society in five Suffolk parishes in the mid 1840s averaged only 6 pounds per year and in another nine, amounted to only only 16 pounds. (32) Widespread poverty meant that few parents were able to pay much in the way of fees, and of the 699 Church schools in Suffolk in the later 1840s, 261 were free schools, forced to rely entirely on subscriptions.(33)

The effects were cumulative; for this lack of resources meant that few applications could be made for grants in aid for the building or support of schools. As the Suffolk diocesan society commented, "while the richer schools are benefited, the poorer ones are overlooked just as though the order of charity were reversed." (34) The situation was even

worse in Norfolk, and between 1833 and 1859 the county received less government grant in aid of day school education per head of the population than any other county in England. (35) Small wonder that 630 square miles of Norfolk were still without an inspected school in the late 1850s and 50 populous Norfolk villages either had no school at all or only private school provision even as late as the 1860s. (36) Suffolk schooling was in slightly better case, with the county receiving rather more grant in aid (though still less than average (37)) than did Norfolk. But with 280 square miles of the county still without an inspected school in the late 1850s, (38) Glyde's conclusion that voluntary effort "is, and ever will be ... a failure" can be seen to have been applicable to both counties. (39)

Nevertheless, though the expansion of provision in Norfolk and Suffolk was relatively slow with a rise of only 2.1 per cent in the proportion of the population enrolled at day school in Norfolk between 1833 and 1851, and of 2.6 per cent in Suffolk, (40) the proportion of day scholars was still above average in 1851. In Norfolk 12.1 per cent of the population was on the books of a day school in mid century, as was 12.3 per cent of the Suffolk population compared to an average of 11.7 per cent over England and Wales. (41)



Comparison with Lancashire, however, illustrates how the Eastern counties were beginning to lag behind for though only 10.6 per cent of the Lancashire population were on the books of a day school in 1851, the industrial region of West Yorkshire, previously an area of marked educational deficiency, was now on a par with Norfolk and Suffolk with 12.2 per cent of the county population enrolled as day school pupils. And the growth rate in school provision in both the industrial areas of Lancashire and West Yorkshire was far superior to those of Norfolk and Suffolk with 4.6 per cent expansion in West Yorkshire and 3.3 per cent in Lancashire. (42)

For the importance given to educating the 'seditious' and turbulent working classes of the North by the two major education Societies in the earlier part of the century continued in the latter part of the period, with Lancashire (and now also West Yorkshire) attracting a major share of Treasury funding in support of education. Thus between 1834 and 1838 Lancashire received nearly 32,000 pounds from National Society and Treasury funding, and while Yorkshire received less than half this amount, the county still attracted grants considerably in excess of those paid to other counties.(43) Certainly these amounts compare very favourably with the total of 1,419 pounds that Glyde calculated had been awarded

to National and British schools in Suffolk in the same period. (44) And while high population densities in Lancashire in particular make these amounts relative, the greater priority given to the industrial regions is again illustrated by the sum of 4s.3d. per head of population (Yorkshire) and 3s.10d. (Lancashire) paid in government grants to day schools between 1833 and 1859, compared to only 2s.7d. (Suffolk) and 1s.10d. (Norfolk). (45)

The importance of these grant payments was enhanced by a similar lack of enthusiasm on the part of the local populations of Lancashire and Yorkshire for the provision of schooling as was demonstrated in Norfolk and Suffolk. Average enrolment figures had certainly risen (the extension of compulsory 'half-time' schooling under the 1844 Factory Act was probably a contributory factor here (46)) but school income per head of population exclusive of government aid was actually lower in Lancashire than it was in Norfolk and Suffolk (47) and, as in the earlier period, the burden of providing schools fell very largely on the shoulders of the local clergy. Dissenting support for education was stronger in large towns like Leeds, Bradford and Rochdale but the level of financial support was not commensurate with the wealth and influence of the Nonconformist community and the large number of dissenting and British schools found

in Manchester and Liverpool were unusual. Support for schooling amongst Roman Catholics was probably strong but large numbers of poor Irish in Catholic communities meant resources for schooling were meagre and the Catholic Poor School Committee also complained that money was granted "where least needed".(48) In short, the expansion of provision in day schooling in the industrial areas between 1833 and 1851 was due to support generated at the national rather than at the local level.

Issues relating to the supply of schooling are but one facet of educational provision, being interconnected also with issues of educational demand, and there was some concern amongst 'experts' and school Inspectors lest their efforts be devalued by working-class apathy. David Stow, for example, argued in 1847 that the provision "of large government grants for the moral and intellectual training of the young" (49) were necessary because "otherwise the people would never educate themselves", but the steady growth in day school enrolment in the North and the East of England is proof of a healthy demand for education for their children amongst working people, despite constant accusations of indifference and apathy by official observers.

### Working-class Attitudes to Education

Demand for education amongst the working classes was not always the sort of demand that educationists such as Kay-Shuttleworth wished to encourage. For much of this demand was for 'alternative' forms of education which reflected the political, social and material imperatives of that 'defective' working-class culture which the educational establishment was seeking actively to eradicate. Probably relatively little of this indigenous educational demand was overtly political; working-class 'alternatives' ranged along a continuum which extended from what might be called the political/resistant forms of education supported by the Socialists and Chartists to the social/expedient forms of education represented by the private schools. But the fact remains that many working people remained hostile or indifferent to the education provided in the public schools, because their view of the purposes of education was very different from those held by the educational establishment.

This last statement must be qualified, however, for many working-class leaders shared the same view of education as an instrument for social reformation, where they differed was on the means and the ends of such reform. Like the liberal and radical



educationists of the middle classes, the Socialist and Chartist leaders of the later 1830s and the 1840s held a passionate belief in the power of education to effect social change. Like them, they saw education as an integral part of a wider programme for social and political transformation. Where they differed was in their view of education as a key to understanding the causes of exploitation and inequality, and as a vital element in furthering the political and social aims of the working-classes. 'Knowledge is power' proclaimed the Poor Man's Guardian, Educate! Educate! Educate! urged the rationalist Socialists, but it was a 'rational' education that was sought and really useful knowledge. Rather than a quiescent society, the purpose of schooling was the achievement of an egalitarian society, in which the capacities and talents of working people could flourish and their value receive its just reward.(50) And here, the radical traditions of the earlier part of the century found continuing expression in a counter-cultural view of education which saw it as a precursor and concomitant of social and political rights and economic justice.

Alternative educational forms did not necessarily involve an explicitly political perspective. For many adults and children the education available in working-class schools and classes represented a means

of self development or personal fulfilment, or simply an interesting way of spending leisure time.(51) Yet though activities such as these were innocuous, the very existence of working-class educational forms presented a broadly political challenge. In such ways working people demonstrated that they could educate themselves in the sort of knowledge they deemed to be useful and interesting, and their independence from the charity of middle-class benefactors. The Chartist movement gave expression to such beliefs, in a way that was deeply disturbing to the ruling classes. (52) As an article in the Northern Star stated, the working classes rejected the "spelling, writing and arithmetic" taught in the provided schools in favour of "the true and profitable education ... which is voluntarily sought by men rendered peaceful in mind and free in action". "Let the people have their rights", the article concluded "and they will instruct themselves." (53) Working people may have wanted their lives transformed by education, but this transformation was to be in line with their own cultural beliefs and traditions and in ways that they chose.

Some of the innumerable private schools which flourished in working-class areas also pursued overt and covert political purposes, (54) but, notwithstanding the class-cultural perspective which

dismissed these schools as worthless, many served very useful educational purposes as parents understood the case and there was a continuing high demand for their services. The investigators of the Manchester Statistical Society saw the chief function of these schools as child-minding (55) and indeed as far as many parents were concerned one of the purposes of sending children to school, whether private or public, was to make sure that they were safely looked after. But as well as looking after their pupils the private schools also taught them - with varying degrees of success - the skills and knowledge that working-class people wanted their children to learn. The Birmingham schoolmistress who insisted "with much warmth" that it was the duty of the parents "to teach morals" (56) was expressing a view about the purpose of schooling that many parents continued actively to support throughout the period. Despite an expansion in public schooling, despite the gradual disappearance of the unpopular monitorial system of organisation and other improvements in public schooling, parents continued to prefer an education for their children that was convenient, of immediate and practical use, and which did not waste time and money or insult and patronise parents by seeking to impose particular religious views or standards of 'morality'. (57) And as Gardner has

summed up, "the private schools offered the education which the working classes demanded for themselves and not that which the middle classes provided for them." (58)

This was exactly the problem. There were, so to speak, two competing and parallel 'systems' of education; one of which strove to transform the indigenous cultural traditions of the working classes through the provision of a comprehensive, coherent and rational system for educating its children in the 'civilised' values of the bourgeoisie, the other not a 'system' at all but a medley of schools and classes, discussion groups and community and family activities which drew on those indigenous cultural traditions to develop the working classes' own means of acquiring what they saw as useful knowledge.

There developed, however, a meeting point across this cultural divide - a common ground where working-class educational demands and aspirations could be met by the public schools in shared and mutual purpose with the providers. And that meeting point was provided by the view, widespread across all sections and classes of the population, that the main purpose of education was to prepare children for "the main business of life", that of getting and earning a living. (59)



### Towards Consensus

Educationists were quick to condemn parental 'apathy' towards the schooling provided for their children and attributed this largely to an 'ignorant' failure to appreciate its moral and cultural worth. Mann commented that

practically, it is to be feared, the length and character of the education given in this country to the young are regulated more by a regard to its material advantage, as connected with their future physical condition, than by any wise appreciation of the benefits of knowledge in itself." (60)

The Newcastle Commission also commented on parental attitudes towards schooling with evident disapproval:

Time for school attendance is spared only with a view to its being preparation for work. Parents have no idea that there is any advantage in children spending so many years at school if the same amount of learning can be acquired in a shorter time. In short, they regard schooling, not as a course of discipline, but only as a means of acquiring reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing, and knitting, as a preparation for the main business of life - earning a living. (61)

But it was not only parents who evaluated education in instrumental terms. Inspector Norris, for example,

was certainly of the opinion that, if they had any regard for it at all, the general public evaluated it solely in material terms - with serious implications for the education of girls in particular. In his opinion,

a very large number of people who are interested in the progress of education think of it only in connection with our national wealth; they mean by education the extension of skill and knowledge as essential elements of productiveness, and therefore with them girls' schooling is a matter of little or no moment. Another still larger class of persons, who from native illiberality of mind are opposed to all education, though ashamed to confess this generally, do not blush to own it with respect to girls.(62)

"Even the friends of the poor" lamented the British Society, "are commonly very selfish, or very shortsighted, with regard to the instruction of girls. They are willing enough to train them up for servants; they forget the great majority of them will be mothers".(63)

This instrumental attitude towards education for the working classes did not inevitably imply a complete lack of concern about the moral and reforming purposes of schooling - Glyde, for example, was fully alive to the causal connections between poverty and

crime and the lack of employment opportunities available to the uneducated even if others were not (64) - but it does suggest that these purposes were given a low priority by the general public. The educational establishment may have viewed the extension of mass elementary education primarily as a means of achieving social and cultural hegemony but public opinion was informed more by the imperatives of the capitalist economy. And the implications of this were many and various, for rather than reflecting the expressed priorities of the educational establishment and the perceived need to 'civilise' the working population, the provision of and demand for schooling corresponded to the conditions of the local labour market.(65)

In general terms, this meant that, despite the expressed priority given to the education of girls, their schooling was still seen to be less important than that of boys. Fewer school places were provided for them in the public day schools and far fewer girls than boys were day scholars in public schools across the country as a whole in 1851, with the proportion of female scholars being only 44 per cent of total enrolment.(66) But the relationship between perceptions of the value of education and the provision of schooling is less straightforward than such simple conclusions suggest, and though a demand

for educated labour encouraged the education of boys in the larger commercial centres, the hostility of the farmers against schooling for boys continued to give girls the advantage in the rural districts of Norfolk and Suffolk. It is important, therefore, to consider again the various pushes and pulls of the labour market and their implications for girls' and boys' access to schooling in detail to avoid possibly premature judgements.

In the industrial areas, as we have seen, the majority of manufacturers were largely indifferent to the education of the working classes and only very few were prepared to make any sort of financial contribution towards the establishment and support of day schools which might deprive them of their child workers.(67) Nevertheless, despite local apathy, (68) the efforts of the National Society and to a lesser extent of the British Society meant that numbers of Lancashire children in the industrial towns did have the opportunity to go to a public school as a day pupil- if they or their parents so wished, (69) and if they could afford it. Leaving aside other considerations for the moment, the decision as to whether a child could go to day school (public or private) depended very largely on two related economic considerations; that is, how much it cost and how much it was worth in terms of an investment.



The immediate costs of schooling were high; fees at a public school were around 8d. to 10d. per week and a child had to have shoes and clothing of a reasonable quality, and even the generally cheaper private schools could cost up to 9d. per week depending on the subjects studied.(70) The opportunity costs of schooling - loss of the child's earnings or of his or her assistance at home to free their mother to earn etc. - also added considerably to costs. For some boys, however, the potential rewards of such an investment could be high. Attitudes of deference and docility, habits of industry and strong sinews were still all that was required of much of the labour force, but productivity and efficiency were beginning to demand the skills of a literate and educated workforce. And this was a demand that was reflected in the policies and practices of at least some of the public schools, and in parental awareness of the investment value of a good education.

More than a straightforward economic 'pull' was involved here, but a move towards a cultural and political convergence which enabled more 'respectable' sections of the working classes to identify, in an instrumental sense if nothing more, with the economic and political status quo - to recognise, as it were, that they too had a stake in

the system of industrial capitalism. This development was underpinned by successes and failures, achievements and aspirations and no precise and exact point can be identified when radicalism, confrontation and 'alternative' ideologies shaded into reformism, conciliation and consensus. But from the mid 1840s, when a number of occupational groups had lost their battles for control of production, and when material conditions began to show "a distinct but modest improvement", political radicalism began to lose its cutting edge.(71) After the defeats and setbacks of 1848, working-class support for independent political action suffered a sharp decline, and a growing recognition that industrial capitalism was here to stay underpinned working-class awareness that they too had an interest in the efficient working of the capitalist economy.(72) Reformism and conciliation were further supported by labour advances for, as we have seen in chapter 5, organised groups like the spinners were finding that negotiation and bargaining was proving to be a more effective means of securing their interests than confrontation or political action.(73) Independence and class pride were not abandoned but were, as Kirk has argued, "harnessed to more reformist and, often, more privatised ends", with working-class respectability becoming identified with "an overall

acceptance of a social and cultural world whose dominant influence was bourgeois in character." (74) In short, the values of the respectable working classes were becoming more individualistic and success oriented in the 1840s and 1850s.

At the same time, the 'alternative' vision of an indigenous working-class system of education began to fade. As the political impetus that had motivated many independent educational initiatives began to decline, a more realistic awareness of the scale of the task of educating the children of the working classes and the practical and financial obstacles to be overcome led to the emergence of a demand for the provision of a national system of secular education through the aegis of the state. Independent educational initiatives continued to command widespread support, but this support sprang from more individualist perceptions of the value of education; it represented a means of self improvement and fulfilment and a route to occupational and social advancement rather than to political and economic reform. These developments have been described by Johnson.

in the wake of the political defeats, independent working-class education continued; in the better-off sectors it may even have increased. But it took on more

individualised forms ('self-education') or lost its connection with politics ('mutual improvement') or became the cultural preserve of the aristocracies. It certainly lost the ambition of being an alternative system, especially with regard to children. At the same time a new kind of educational agitation began to emerge, linked to popular liberalism and the anti-Anglican alliance. Working-class activists began to demand education through the state, even though initially, ..., they insisted still on some popular control.(75)

This agitation was not to bear fruit until 1870, but many members of the working classes also began to look to the existing system of provided schooling as a facility that could be utilised for their own purposes. And here, though there may have been little shared criteria as to what schooling was for between the managers and consumers of public elementary education (76) - particularly Church school education - an operational consensus effectively came into play in many schools which allowed reformist goals to be accommodated with instrumental purposes in pragmatic alliance. Indeed, in the case of British schools, particularly those in the larger commercial and industrial centres, (77) it is arguable that school managers and more 'aristocratic' working-class parents (78) did effectively share the same criteria, with the enterprise values of dissent and the more



fluid organisational and administrative structures of the parent society allowing 'reform' to blend with self-improvement in a shared alignment of purposes and interests. Be that as it may, reliance on voluntary provision and attendance meant that schools had to provide a service which both subscribers and 'customers' recognised as being of worth, and the criteria by which that worth was assessed were largely instrumental and material. Notwithstanding their long-term purposes, pragmatism encouraged school managers to take account of consumer demand and to emphasise the material benefits to be gained from an investment in schooling, and an increasing number of schools, particularly British schools, began stress the value of schooling as a means of acquiring marketable skills.

The Leeds British school for boys, for example, proudly announced the "very eligible situations with merchants and tradesmen" occupied by former scholars, (79) Spicer Street school in Spitalfields reported with pride of the "boys who have been enabled ... to rise in the scale of society and to occupy ... stations of influence and usefulness", and increasing numbers of schools made similar claims.(80) Even for boys from quite lowly social backgrounds, economic expansion was providing new opportunities that placed

an immediately recognisable value on schooling. As Inspector Bowyer explained,

the extension of commerce, banking, manufacture, gives employment to hosts of skilful pens and calculating heads; innumerable new offices and establishments undreamt of by our ancestors, arise, opening extensive and untrod fields to intellectual employment. A striking example of this is afforded by electric telegraph and railway companies. The persons employed by the former ... can earn their living entirely by intellectual labour. Education has consequently been their industrial training ... even for the engine driver and porter some amount of education is indispensable".

He heard constantly, he said, of boys educated in the workhouse schools "obtaining situations in shops, warehouses, lawyers' offices, solely by means of a good hand and skill in accounts". (81). Even half-time factory boys were told that if they "followed up the instruction they received, they would not need to be workers in a mill ... they would rise to superior positions in the world". (82) Even more to the point, such messages had very real meaning. Clerks and book-keepers were scarce and well paid, the Great Northern and the London and North-Western railway companies would not employ boys who could not read and write, and there were examples of men in the community who

had achieved advancement, even "spectacular successes" through education.(83) Even half-timers could be given preference for promotion in the factory if they did well at school.(84) And when prospective employers went into the schools to ask "what boys have you that are bright and sharp?" when seeking apprentices and clerks, (85) pupils, teachers and parents sat up and took notice. Under the impetus of instrumentalism the concept of education was gradually changing for boys, with the expectation that a period of formal schooling was a fundamental part of the process becoming increasingly axiomatic.

The argument must not be taken too far: the idea that education was the exclusive prerogative of schools was slow to take root and traditional forms of education, such as the spinner-piecer system of recruitment and training, continued to compete with the schools. Even in the relatively more prosperous climate of the 1840s and 1850s family incomes were frequently insufficient to bear the costs of full-time schooling, and there is evidence to suggest that the benefits of schooling were recognised and accessible only to the more 'aristocratic' sections of the industrial working classes. (86) Even those employers who extolled "the superior quickness of observation, readiness to learn and desire to excel" of the educated workman confessed to some ambivalence

over the issue of whether such men were likely to be "unsettled". (87) Nor did the Anglican and National schools - and these represented the majority of public schools in Lancashire as well as in Norfolk and Suffolk - or 'expert' educational opinion espouse the notion of schooling as a route to occupational and social mobility with the fervour displayed by the British schools or by Mr. Bowyer, but rather continued to emphasise the importance of schooling as an instrument of social reform. (88)

The extent to which Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of boys' schools in terms of the occupational successes of former pupils does suggest, however, that instrumental criteria also informed their immediate perceptions of the purposes of educating the working classes. More importantly, an evaluation of schooling in terms of the occupational destinations of pupils indicates the extent to which the ideologies of self-improvement and of national reform had found common ground, with individual aspirations linked to reformist goals in a pragmatic consensus as to what it meant to be a 'civilised' and/or 'respectable' citizen and worker. Certainly, although both provision and daily and long term attendance remained constrained and limited, although deep divisions about the theoretical purposes of education continued to inform negative perceptions of



working-class attitudes towards provided schooling on the part of the educational establishment, a pragmatic alignment of aspirations and purposes had created a climate in the industrial regions where the formal education of boys was increasingly recognised by all socio-economic groups as being of value. As Mr. Winder summed up in his report to the Newcastle Commission on elementary education in the industrial regions, "the notion that education is a good thing ... is generally diffused, and has distinctly established itself in the public opinion of the working-classes. (89)

This was not the case for girls. Respectability had, as we have seen, a familial rather than individualistic orientation for women, with a semantic ambiguity embedded in words and phrases such as 'independence', 'self-respect' and 'self-esteem' that defined their meaning in gender-based terms, neatly reversing the criteria against which the respectable behaviour of the two sexes was assessed. Whether in employment or not, the respectable married woman made the care of her home and family her first priority, deferring (at least in public) to the authority of her husband and demonstrating her self-respect by the snowy whiteness of the family linen, the high shine on the furniture and brassware and the thrifty economy with which she managed the household

budget.

It was taken for granted that a working-class Lancashire girl would go to the mill before marriage, (90) even that she would continue to work there after marriage in the weaving districts, but in no sense was this seen to be an occupation on a par with male employment. Factory work, indeed any sort of paid employment, was merely something women 'did' in addition to their main occupation of housewifery. No prospective employer would be seeking 'bright and sharp' girls in the schools if appointing apprentices or clerks, and there were no expanding opportunities in commerce or industry to encourage their education. As Mr. Hare said, "the poor are more willing to spend money on the education of their sons than of their daughters", (91) and if instrumentalism and reformism were encouraging expanding awareness of the value of a more 'academically' orientated education for boys, they were encouraging an increasingly limited and domestic orientation to the education of girls. Thus even a positive evaluation of the importance of female education did not imply any sort of rationale that might give value to girls' intellectual development, nor even did it necessarily involve an expectation that girls should experience formal schooling.

What a girl really needed to learn were the

domestic skills to enable her to run a comfortable home, perhaps some basic literacy (92) and, if the time and money was available, a little general knowledge. The 'Model Wife', as described in a lecture at Mossley New Connection Methodist Chapel in 1858 was indeed one who had just such accomplishments, being primarily concerned with domestic matters though "able to write" and possessing some acquaintanceship "with the history of her own country, with a knowledge of geography, and.. (of) .. those worthies of England, both men and women, who shed a lustre on their country". (93) And how should a girl best learn the domestic skills and knowledge she required but by working alongside her mother in the home? Even Inspector Norris, a vociferous campaigner against the "very general apathy that prevails on the matter of girls' education" was of the opinion that "the mother is really more competent to teach such things than the teacher". (94) And if the schools had little to offer that could not be provided at home, why bother to go to the trouble and expense of sending a girl to school?

For many Lancashire parents a cost/benefit analysis of the value of schooling for girls demonstrated very firmly that schooling, especially full-time schooling, was an investment that paid very limited

returns at best. For many others, whether they valued education or not, the circumstances of daily life meant that their daughters were simply too useful at home to be spared to go to school. Somewhat ironically, therefore, the ideologies of gender that gave a theoretical primacy to the education of girls also operated to define their education as being of limited importance, while the perceived 'deficiencies' of the working-class Lancashire woman that provided the major theoretical impetus for the provision of schooling for girls, also operated to limit girls' access to those schools. Not surprisingly, therefore, though both sexes continued to suffer educational disadvantage with many children rarely, if ever, going near a school of any description, girls' access to schooling still retained the qualitative and quantitative inferiority in 1851 (95) that had been apparent in 1833.

#### Access to Schooling

In 1851, Lancashire girls made up the minority of scholars on the books of all day schools (43.8 per cent of scholars), they were much less likely than boys to attend a provided day school (girls represented around 42 per cent of pupils) and they were even in the minority at the private schools



(47.7 per cent), contrary to common practice in many other regions. (96) Estimation of the proportion of the female child population on the books of day schools in Lancashire also suggests that, with only around 54.6 per cent<sup>at</sup> school, Lancashire girls continued to be amongst the most educationally deprived in the whole country, with only metropolitan Middlesex and Bedfordshire having lower proportions of girls at day school. (97) Even the forces of compulsion seemed unable to overcome the barriers against the schooling of girls, and they were even under represented in the compulsory factory schools established under the legislation of 1833 and 1844, representing only 43 per cent of pupils returned for Lancashire factory schools in 1851. (98)

The Act of 1833 aimed to protect children in the cotton factories from exploitation and overwork by forbidding their employment under the age of nine and by limiting the hours of nine to thirteen year olds to eight hours per day. Two of these hours were to be spent in school and no child could be accepted for work without a certificate of school attendance for the previous week. These educational clauses were further extended in the 1844 Act, making children between the ages of eight and thirteen 'half-time' scholars in attendance at a school for 3 hours per day or 5 hours on alternate days. But although, in

theory, girls were to enjoy equal benefits from compulsory schooling, (99) in practice, the increase in the factory employment of adult women that resulted from the legislation led to a compensatory increase in the domestic work of girls. The Manchester Statistical Society recognised that the demands of daily life prevented many children from attending a day school in 1838, particularly the girls. "They are more useful indoors," it was said, "and make better nurses. Many a young girl was pointed out by her mother as being too useful to be spared to go to school." (100) With the loss or reduction of children's earnings following the Factory Acts forcing an increase in the employment of adult women, however, girls also became too useful at home to be spared for the factories, and as the proportion of adult women in the cotton mills increased, from 30.8 per cent of the total workforce in 1835 to 39 per cent of the expanded workforce of 1862 (101), so the proportion of girls working in the factories declined. Mr. Winder found in Rochdale and in Bradford,

Owing to the temptation of high wages, and sometimes from the necessity of contributing to the family maintenance, many married women work regularly in the mills. In such cases the young children are left in charge of some old woman, or, as

constantly is the case, of their elder brothers and sisters of the age of 6 and upwards. A very large number of children, particularly girls, are kept away from school in this way; and thus the factory system, which by compulsory half-time encourages education in the later part of school life, discourages it in the earlier by throwing upon young children what ought properly to be their mother's work. (102)

But Mr. Winder failed to recognise that the same reasons continued to discourage girls' schooling under the half-time system, with a decline in the proportion of girls employed in the cotton factories from 6.2 per cent of the total workforce in 1835 to only 3.9 per cent in 1862. (103) That there was a "falling off" in the attendance of girls at school due "to the substitution of the labour of boys for that of girls in the mills" seems to have been seen as preferable, in the balance, to girls' continuing employment in the factories - or so suggested the President of Ancoats Lyceum school remarking the diminution in numbers of female half-timers at his school. (104) It is likely, therefore, that despite the attempt to extend education to the 'uncivilised' female population of Lancashire by compulsion, the experiences of the 20 illiterate female factory workers interviewed by the master of the night school they attended in Ancoat in the later 1860s were

fairly typical for Lancashire girls. None of these girls had attended any day school, and as the master wrote to Inspector Fearon,

Of these 9 said they remained at home until they were eleven years old when they went to the silk mill and worked full time; 4 remained at home to look after the younger children while the mother went to the mill; 5 went to service until 13 years old; and the other two did what little cleaning they could get at neighbours' houses".(105)

Non-attendance at a day school did not necessarily mean that girls had no access to schooling at all, and in marked contrast to the day schools, girls made up the majority of pupils on the books of the Sunday schools.

These schools were very important in giving both sexes some limited access to schooling, and in Manchester and Salford, for example, just under 69% of children who received any formal schooling at all between 1834 and 1843 attended Sunday school only.(106) The Manchester Statistical Society found in Pendleton in 1838, however, that "there is only 1 boy to every 2 girls" in the Sunday schools and concluded that "it is mainly among the younger portion of the female population that these excellent institutions are exercising their powerful influence". (107) And though girls' enrolment across



the county as a whole did not match these high levels, girls outnumbered boys by nearly 14,000 to make up 52 per cent of Sunday school pupils in 1851. (108). The Rev. Thurtell remarked in 1847 that "the Sunday school in Lancashire supplied, till of late years, most of the education that the poor received and they are still of great importance". (109) For many girls they provided, and continued to provide, all the schooling they were likely to receive.

Night classes were also run by a number of Sunday schools for the purposes of secular instruction at a "rudimentary" level and, again, girls were likely to be in the majority of pupils. (110). Other evening classes, providing education beyond this level to adults "sufficiently grounded in educational knowledge" were, however, dominated by male members, with expected levels of educational accomplishment and a whole host of formal and informal barriers operating to limit female membership. (111) The Lancashire and Cheshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes, for example, while claiming a 50 per cent membership of "operatives on weekly wages" in 1864-5, had a female membership, of all social classes, of only around 10 per cent in both the 1830s and the 1860s. (112) Thus in addition to their limited access to day schools, working-class females in Lancashire also had very limited access to the educational

resources which enabled Lancashire men to compensate for limited elementary schooling in pursuit of self-improvement.(113)

There was some slight improvement in the relative position of girls. By the time of the Newcastle Inquiry in 1861, though still heavily outnumbered by boys in the day schools, the proportion of girls on the books of the public day schools had risen very slightly to 45.7 per cent of pupils.(114) Nevertheless, in the industrial areas of Lancashire the education of girls was still, as it was in the earlier period, quantitatively and qualitatively inferior to that of boys. Neither educational priority, nor educational progress can be said to have exercised a particularly positive influence on girls' access to 'good' schooling.

In Norfolk and Suffolk, however, a region that was given very low priority in the allocation of national resources, where few problems requiring educational solutions were seen to exist and where changes in the economic and social roles of women had provoked relatively little public anxiety, girls' levels of day school enrolment were far superior to those of Lancashire girls and, often, were even superior to those of boys in the region. Again, the explanations for this somewhat contradictory pattern are to be found in the conditions of the local labour market

interacting with the attitudes of parents and employers.

The removal of allowances in aid of wages and the ending of outdoor relief to the able-bodied created tremendous pressures on family incomes, with a need for all members of agricultural labouring families to take any available employment that worked against attendance at a day school. At Fakenham in Norfolk it was said, "The first question asked at the Board, when a man applies for relief, is 'what is the age of your children?' If they are of 9 or 10, they are held capable of earning something" and, as was commented in the 1843 Report on the employment of women and children in agriculture, in Suffolk, "the New Poor Law had a visible effect on education, in making the children used as earners at an early age". (115) Despite technological innovation and some dawning appreciation that "intelligence is required in the management of steam machinery", (116), the consensus of farming opinion still held, in 1861, "that the educated labourer has not proved himself to be at all more valuable to his employer than the uneducated", (117) and why bother with a long-term and speculative investment to improve the behaviour of the labourers when economic coercion and the forces of law and order were able to subdue them much more cheaply and immediately?

Even when parents were able and willing to send children to school, in many instances they were "informed that they must give up the child or be dismissed from labour themselves", (118) with the consequence that even children as young as six were sent to work in the fields. Or at least boys were; for the strong gender divisions of labour that limited the employment opportunities of women in agriculture, also limited demand for girls to work in the fields - and for their domestic labour at home. Girls and women were employed in the gangs, and girls were also needed for child minding and domestic work at times like harvest when their mothers were busy in the fields, but, overall, they were much less disadvantaged than boys, being free to attend school more regularly and for a greater length of time. In the country districts of the Eastern counties stated the Rev. Cook, it was exceptional for boys to stay at school beyond the age of eight and a half, and, even though the census was taken in March, when demand for child labour was relatively low, the proportion of occupied boys in Norfolk and Suffolk came close to that of Lancashire, with 35.5 per cent and 32.4 per cent of 10 to 14 year olds 'at work'. (119)

Not only was it easier for a girl to be spared to go to school, there was also good reason for her to attend and, particularly where schooling was free,



(120) the prospect of a good job in domestic service encouraged country girls to attend a day school. (121) In the country districts, therefore, we see a reversal of the situation in Lancashire, with girls rather than boys having greater opportunity and greater incentive to attend day school; an advantage which was reflected in the 1851 returns which showed girls in the majority of day scholars in 17 of 39 registration districts in Norfolk and Suffolk, (122), the majority of pupils in the Anglican schools which made up the bulk of provided school provision, and with equal or higher proportions of the female population at school in comparison with the male population in over half the districts of the two counties. (123) In 1861 also, girls were still in the majority of scholars at the day schools in association with the Anglican Church, (124) and although instrumentalist attitudes were beginning to encourage a positive appreciation of the value of education to boys as well as to girls, reliance on boy labour, (probably sharpened by the decrease in the field work of women (125)) continued to limit boys' schooling. Though a pen was said to "earn an easy loaf", (126) though out-migration and expanding opportunities outside agriculture placed a premium on literacy, though conditions were slowly improving for labouring families, the earnings of boys were still

too important to forego. The experiences of the Norfolk woman Mary Cole, who it will be remembered made enormous efforts to send her eight daughters to school (127) illustrate the barriers that operated against the education of her sons. As she told the Rev.J. Fraser,

Her boys haven't had as much schooling as the girls, they had to go out to work so young. Three of them went out at 6 and took 1s. a week. Her husband's master ... would have paid him off if he hadn't let them go to work. Her eldest son ...; he has improved himself and can write pretty well now. He wrote home to his parents to beg that his younger brothers may be kept at school, as he had found the good of a bit of learning. She has another son living in Herefordshire, he can neither read nor write, because he has been at work since he was 6 years old.

The other two boys who are alive are poor scholars; they've been to night school for two or three winters but are too tired with their day's work when they get there to learn much. (128)

The situation in the towns, however, was different yet again, and here, as in Lancashire, the pushes and pulls of the local labour market gave the advantage to boys, with a lower proportion of the female population enrolled at day school in the registration districts of Bury St. Edmunds, Ipswich, Norwich, and

Yarmouth than of the male populations, and with consistently lower levels of public day school attendance for girls in the urban areas. (129) Thus in Ipswich and Yarmouth, though the level of girls' enrolment at day school had shown some improvement, with girls representing 47 per cent of day scholars in both towns at the time of the Newcastle enquiry, they made up only 32.7 per cent of public day school enrolment in Yarmouth and only 42 per cent in Ipswich. (130) Further, though Mr. Hare found that their schooling suffered "no peculiar or extraordinary impediment" such as those presented by female factory employment, even when Ipswich and Yarmouth girls were enrolled at day school, "their school attendance is both subject to more interruption and briefer in attendance". He attributed this to the double handicap of employment and domestic labour experienced by girls:

Sometimes, like their brothers they are kept away for the sake of what they can earn by occasional employment ...; but more frequently they are required to help in domestic matters, in seasons of sickness, or when the mother is out at work, or is secluded by a new birth in the family.

(131)

And though attending Sunday school in larger numbers than boys, girls and women had only very limited

access to the supplementary schooling offered by the evening classes. (132)

The picture of superior female access to day schooling in some rural districts of the two counties must also be tempered by the fact that these schools were almost invariably inferior in quality to those in the town, and that girls' school attendance in general was proportionally higher at the 'lowest' end of the school spectrum (133) - an argument that is pursued in depth in the next chapter.

Mr. Cumin's report of the responses he received to his enquiries as to the value of education for the two sexes provides a fitting end to this chapter, with its pithy summary of popular opinion regarding the relative merits of female and male education.

An Irishman whom I met driving a cart, summed up the case in favour of education thus: "Do you think reading and writing is of any use to people like yourself?" I inquired. "To be sure I do, Sir", the man answered with a strong brogue; "and do you think I would be shoved into every dirty job as I am now? No, Sir! instead of driving this horse I'd be riding him." The value of education to boys is clear; but for girls it might seem to be different. However, in the opinion of the working classes it is not so. Various reasons were given to me for educating girls. One man, . . . , said, "I don't know, Sir, whether



you would like to have your love-letters read or written by strangers." Another common labourer .... said, "I have always heard and read that a virtuous and intelligent woman makes the best mother, ... and declared that where the wife was the reverse the husband might be driven to the pothouse. Another man said that he thought the better educated a girl was the more likely she was to be married; and certainly there is no doubt that schoolmistresses and pupil-teachers are much sought after as wives. At all events ... with girls as with boys it is impossible to rise to any important position without being able to read and write. Without that knowledge a scullery-maid cannot become a cook or a housekeeper.(134)

Women were, in short, to be educated to for the purposes of getting and keeping a husband, to be mothers and to be servants. How the practices of girls' schools reflected these views, and the more high-minded transforming purposes of the educational 'experts', remains to be seen in the next chapter.

### Conclusions

Though marked by a 'change of gear', with an acceleration of schooling provision for the working classes, developments towards a national system of

educational organisation and administration and the evolution of a body of 'expert' educational theory in replacement of the crude 'reform and control' models of the previous decades, educational policy after the 1830s was also characterised by the same fundamental belief that the purpose of educating girls was to make them good wives and mothers that was evident in the earlier period.

A more creative, less repressive conception of reform may have been developed, but whether the goals were 'control' and obedience or class-cultural transformation, the concept of educating girls as the prime agents of cultural reproduction remained central. And if the 'true happiness' and real interests of the working classes lay in a recognition and acceptance of the benign operation of capitalist economic organisation and the manifest superiority of bourgeois cultural values, so also they lay in a recognition and acceptance of the 'natural' roles of men and women within a civilised society, and how best to promote such recognition but through the provision of education? So again, as in the earlier period, the education of girls was accorded a theoretical primacy based firmly on a gender differentiated, patriarchal concept of the 'needs' of the capitalist state.

The same dichotomies remained, however, with gender

divisions of labour interacting with more instrumental views of the value of education to reverse theoretical priorities and to define the education of girls as being<sup>of</sup> less importance than that of boys. For while the widening skills-base of the capitalist economy increasing placed a premium on the production of 'educated' male workers, giving an immediate incentive to formal schooling for boys, there were few tangible benefits to be gained from the provision of schooling for girls. An 'educated' servant was probably more satisfactory, but spending time at school could make a girl over ambitious and disinclined to accept the restrictions of service and, given a respectable home life, the mother was really the best person to teach her daughter the domestic skills she needed to learn.

Not surprisingly, therefore, though there was an increase in the numbers of girls enrolled at day school, even an increase in the relative proportion of girls enrolled at the public day schools, boys still represented the majority of day scholars overall and the majority of pupils enrolled at the public day schools.

Lancashire girls remained acutely disadvantaged in terms of their access to day schooling, despite being targeted as being in particular need of formal education and despite the introduction of compulsory

schooling for children employed in the cotton factories. Though the cultural values of respectability and the fading away of an alternative vision of a working-class system of education were encouraging a positive evaluation of provided schooling for boys, local circumstances, local conditions of employment and the cultural milieu of working-class life in the industrial areas continued to define full-time schooling as an unnecessary or unaffordable indulgence for the great majority of girls.

The reverse was the case for girls in the rural areas of Norfolk and Suffolk, with immediate and future occupational opportunities operating to support girls' access to full-time schooling. The advantages enjoyed by rural girls were not maintained in the urban centres and girls' access to schooling was more limited than that of boys in the two counties throughout the period. But in many of the registration districts and in the Anglican schools of the region girls actually made up the majority of scholars at day school, to be represented in equal or greater numbers than boys in the day schools of over half the registration districts of the two counties in 1851. This position was not maintained, the opening up of employment opportunities outside farming was beginning to encourage an increase in the



day school enrolment of boys by the 1860s, but girls still made up the majority of scholars at the day schools in association with the Anglican church in 1861.

Though the bias of middle-class observers may well have informed their perceptions of the relative merits of provided versus private schooling, the fact still remains that the educational disadvantages experienced by girls limited their access to schooling in qualitative as well as quantitative terms. With a pattern of school enrolment that still favoured private over public schooling for girls, part-time over full-time and with the problems faced by rural schools still placing severe constraints on funding, and with the proportion of female pupils being much higher in those schools at the lower end of the spectrum of educational quality.

The broad cross-class consensus that had been achieved around the 1820s in respect of the purposes of educating girls was matched with a broad agreement on the purposes of educating boys achieved around the 1850s. The extent to which such agreement informed the nature and quality of the educational experiences also thought appropriate to the two sexes after the later 1830s provides the major question that informs the subject of the next chapter.

## Notes

1. Johnson, 'Notes', pp. 46, 49.
2. This section draws heavily on Johnson's arguments, particularly those put forward in 'Notes'; 'Educational Policy and Social Control in Early Victorian England', Past and Present, no.49, Nov. 1970, pp.96-119; 'Educating the Educators: 'Experts' and the State 1833-1839', Donajgrodzki, A.P., Social Control in Nineteenth-Century Britain, London, 1977, pp.77-108.
3. Johnson, 'Experts', p.100.
4. Blackwoods, 1827, quoted by Perkin, op.cit., p.292-3.
5. Roebuck, National Education, quoted by Johnson, 'Notes', p.88.
6. Quarterly Journal of Education, 1831, quoted by Hurt, op.cit., p.24-5.
7. Thompson, E.P., op.cit., p.333; Johnson, 'Experts', op.cit., p.87.
8. Kay, J. 'The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Class in Manchester in 1832', in Four Periods of Public Education, 1862, p.64; Mc.Culloch, J.R. 'On the Rise, Progress, Present State and Prospects of the British Cotton Manufacture', 1827, quoted by Simon, op.cit., p.168.
9. Kay, ibid, p.74.
10. Johnson, ibid, p.91.
11. Simon, ibid, p.153.
12. Johnson, ibid, pp. 87, 89.
13. P.P. 1856 XLVIII, p.387.
14. ibid.
15. Phrases used by Thomas Chalmers, quoted by Johnson, 'Experts', p.89.
16. P.P. 1834 XIX, p.39.
17. Johnson, ibid, p.90.
18. . P.P. 1837-8 VII, p.23

19. P.P. 1834 XLIII, p.13.
20. Again, much of the responsibility for poverty was attributed to the supposed deficiencies of working people themselves - despite the conditions of the labour market and the uncertainties of the system of poor relief under the 1834 Act as it operated in Suffolk and Norfolk. See, for example, Kay's report on the training of the children of paupers in P.P.1838 XXVIII, appendix B3, p.140.
21. P.P. 1838 VII, p.16.
22. Though 'expert' views regarding the establishment of a state system of education were mixed.
23. Goldstrom, J.M., in Mc.Cann (ed.), op.cit., p.101.
24. Annual Report of the National Society, 1841, pp. 151-156.
25. Annual Report of the British Society, 1833, p.7.
26. Hall, 'Domestic Ideology', p.25.
27. Stephens, 'Education', p.74.
28. P.P. 1867-8 XVII, footnote to p.29.
29. P.P. 1843 XII, p.216.
30. Quoted by Digby, op.cit., p.189.
31. Stephens, op.cit., pp.78-9.
32. ibid, p.74.
33. There were 300 free Church schools maintained as follows:
  - endowment 28
  - subscription 261
  - endowment plus subscription 11
 Church School Enquiry 1847-8, p.2.
34. Annual Report of the Diocesan Society for the Archdeaconry of Suffolk, 1849-50.
35. Norfolk received 1s.10d. per head, 1s.6d. less than the national average. Stephens, op.cit., p.362.
36. ibid, p.74.

37. Suffolk received 2s.7d. per head of population between 1833 and 1859. ibid, p.362.
38. ibid, p.74.
39. Glyde, 'Suffolk', op.cit., p.246.
40. Calculated from statistics of enrolment given by Stephens, op.cit., p.352.
41. Ibid
42. ibid.
43. Sanderson, M., 'National and British', pp.13, 15.
44. Glyde, 'Suffolk', p.209. Suffolk Church schools had received £2,813 via the National Society by 1846-7. Church School Enquiry, p.4.
45. Stephens, ibid, p.362.
46. There was a three fold expansion in the number of half-timers between 1833 and 1868. Ibid, p.99.
47. It was just under 10d. in 1858. Norfolk and Suffolk raised nearly 1s.2d. and just over 1s.2d. respectively per head from local sources. Ibid, p.363.
48. ibid, p.90.
49. David Stow, 1847, quoted by Gardner, op.cit., p.84.
50. Quoted by Simon, op.cit., p.259.
51. See the examples given by Frith. Frith, S., in Mc.Cann, P. (ed.), op.cit., p.83.
52. ibid, p.84.
53. Northern Star 22/6/1839 in ibid, p.92 note 74.
54. Gardner, op.cit., pp.94, 103 note 50.
55. M.S.S., Manchester, 1834, p.5.
56. P.P. 1843 XVIII, p.168-9.
57. Though whether parents objected to the teaching of religion on sectarian grounds, or because they resented the social control purposes embedded therein is impossible to say. Inspector Fitch said,  
Nor must I conceal the fact that there are



many parents who object to the religious character so strongly impressed upon most of the state-aided schools. I attended a large meeting of working people in Leeds . . . , and in the course of the discussion I asked how it was, that notwithstanding the existence of so many institutions on a public basis, so many parents seemed to prefer the private school. One speaker said strongly, that for his part he thought 'it was because there was too much religion in the aided school' and the remark was very loudly and generally cheered.

Quoted by Gardner, op.cit., p.165.

58. ibid., p.161.

59. The Newcastle Commission, P.P. 1861 XXI.1.pp.350-1.

60. P.P. 1852-3 XC, p.xli.

61. ibid.

62. P.P. 1856 XLVII, p.386.

63. Annual Report of the British Society, 1833, p.7.

64. Glyde, op.cit., p.247.

65. The term 'correspondence' is used here deliberately, though the correspondence identified links popular cross-class perceptions of the purposes of schooling with economic organisation rather than seeing it in the terms defined by Bowles and Gintis. The concentration on working-class education in this study, however, means that the overall class-based structure and organisation of education remains unexplored. Certainly, though the cultural and social purposes of girls' education are stressed here, this also recognises the role of schooling in preparing future workers to take their 'appropriate' place in the hierarchical organisation of capitalist production.

66. 44.4 per cent of boys and 43.5 per cent of girls (of all classes) were scholars in 1851, according to the education census of that year. Just under 44 per cent of pupils 'on the books' of the public day schools were girls; that is, 178,094 fewer girls than boys.  
P.P. 1852-3 XC, pp.xxvii, 4.

67. See, for example, the factory owners cited by Sanderson, Brown, Cruickshank and Ward. Sanderson, M., 'Education and the Factory', op.cit.; Brown, C., 'Lancashire Industrialists and their Schools 1833-1902', Journal of Educational Administration and History, vol.xv, no.1, 1983, pp.10-21.; Cruickshank, M., Children and Industry, Manchester, 1981; Ward, G., 'The Education of Factory Child Workers 1833-1850', Economic History, vol.iii, no.10, February 1935.
68. Gardner suggests, very rightly in my view, that so-called parental 'apathy' was a problem of school supply (and provision) rather than of absence of demand amongst the working classes. Gardner, op.cit., p.101.
69. See, for example, P.P. 1845 XXXV p.49 for instances of children making independent decisions about school attendance.
70. Laqueur, op.cit., p.158; Gardner, op.cit., p.22.
71. Kirk, op.cit., pp.57, 66-7, 81.
72. Ibid, pp.67, 88-9;
73. Ibid, pp.145, 222.
74. Ibid.
75. Johnson, 'Really Useful Knowledge', pp.99-100.
76. Frith, op.cit., p.87.
77. Hurt has suggested that, "the closer families were physically and culturally to the new forces of nineteenth-century industrialised society the readier they were to spend money on their children's education if they could afford it". Hurt, op.cit., p.34.
78. Goldstrom has suggested that British School parents were of a higher social rank than National School parents. He describes British, Wesleyan and Congregational schools as "the aristocrats of working-class schools". Goldstrom, J.M. 'The Changing Social Content of Elementary Education as Reflected in the School Books in Use in England 1800-1870', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham 1968, pp.7, 215 note 1. According to Inspector Cumin, such distinctions also applied to Sunday schools; "the children in the dissenting schools are always from a higher

class than those in the Church schools". Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI A, p.34.

79. Annual Report of the British Society, 1826, p.48.
80. Annual Reports of the British Society, 1828, p.36; 1831, p.78; 1832, pp.55-6; 1838, p.81; 1842, pp.77, 90; 1843, p.80; 1845, p.11.
81. P.P. 1850 XLIII, pp.58-9. He had the "general impression" that "the demand for intellectual labour is at present greater than the supply".
82. Oldham Chronicle, April 7th., 1860.
83. Kirk, op.cit., p.225. Tylecote also cites instances of working-class men achieving occupational and social mobility through education. Tylecote, M., The Mechanics' Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire Before 1851, Manchester, 1957, p.262.
84. Inspector Baker reported that in 8 of the 23 factory schools in his district preference was given to workers belonging to the schools when vacancies arose. P.P. 1869 XIV p.219. It can safely be assumed that few, if any, of the half-timers thus promoted were girls.
85. This was the custom of Mr. Ransome of the agricultural machinery manufactory in Ipswich. Annual Report of the Ipswich British and Foreign School Society, 1848.
86. Hurt suggests, for example, that the cultural message that children from the working classes should not aspire beyond their station in life was internalised by many as a result of their 'educational' experiences within the family and community. Hurt, 'Elementary Schooling', op.cit., p.30.
87. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.2, p.242.
88. Inspector Mitchell explicitly denied that the purpose of provided schooling was to encourage or support occupational mobility. "The object to be pursued", he said, "is to fit the child for his present occupation and status in society, not to raise him out of it". In making a distinction between the education required by boys from urban and rural districts, however, he implicitly recognised a direct link between schooling and occupational prospects. P.P. 1850, XLIII, p.326.



89. In stating this, Mr. Winder recognised that not all parents would take this support so far as to actually send their 'children' (boys) to school.

Not a man whom you meet who does not make this profession (education is a good thing), who would not explicitly recognise the obligation, and feel that its breach requires excuses. Unquestionably with many it is only a verbal profession bearing but little fruit in act.

But he also recognised that occupational prospects played a part in transforming verbal professions into action, albeit with a pragmatic definition of what knowledge was really useful.

Generally speaking there is little active demand for other intellectual teaching than reading, writing and arithmetic ... as a direct means of advancement in the world. Promotion to an office or a warehouse is the most attainable object of ambition for the children of the working man in such places as Bradford and Rochdale, and for this nothing more is necessary.

Newcastle, P.P. 1861.2. pp.195, 204.

90. This was the case in the spinning as well as the weaving districts. Liddington and Norris, op.cit., pp. 57, 59.

91. Newcastle, P.P.1861 XXI.2, p.247.

92. Literacy figures for women in Lancashire suggest the ability to read may well have been seen as a dispensable luxury (see chapters 8 & 9). For an example of illiterate women keeping household accounts by a system of their own devising see Liddington and Norris, op.cit., p.33.

93. Kirk, op.cit., p.218.

94. P.P. 1856 XLVII, p.386. Inspector Norris's perception of the purposes of educating girls extended into proposals for a completely different system of education for the two sexes, compatible with their 'natural' qualities and roles. "We shall best improve our schools for girls", he said, if we keep steady in view the demand which that service (to God) will make upon them in after life. They will have to serve God by being good sisters, good wives, good mothers, good housewives. Their life will be an indoor life; their sphere will be the family. Here will be their work; for this



the school should distinctly prepare them. He advocated the establishment of 'training homes' in connection with the best girls' schools, where pupil teachers would receive industrial (domestic) training.

teachers thus trained in all that concerns household work would be far more likely than our present set to infuse the family element into our girls' schools. And this emphatically is what is wanted. The boy's school is to train him to be a citizen, it should therefore be in some sort a little republic. The girl's school is to train her for the duties of home. Its internal order should therefore as much as possible resemble that of a family.

This would include "a classroom full of infants" (a "mere incumbrance" in a boy's school) for the nursery training of girls.

P.P. 1852-3 LXXX, pp.464-467.

95. The 1851 Education Census returns, whilst more accurate than those of 1833, still have weaknesses. Figures given for Lancashire in the summary tables, for example, (123,625 boys, 96,398 girls enrolled at day school) differ from those given in table O (121,140 boys, 94,628 girls), though the relative proportions of male and female scholars remained the same at just under 44 per cent girls. P.P.1852-3 XC pp.4-5, cxlvi-cxlvii.

Gardner's discussion of the information given for private schools in Bristol reveals some of the difficulties with, for example, large differences between the occupational returns in the population census (taken at the same time) and the education census. Gardner, op.cit., pp.54-65.

Statistics of occupation for Lancashire show 134.7 thousand boys and 124.7 thousand girls as scholars, though these figures would include those children being educated at home. Coleman, B., 'The Incidence of Education in Mid Century', in Wrigley, E.A.(ed.) Nineteenth-Century Society, London, 1972, pp.398, 400, 403.

96. The returns show girls making up the majority of private school pupils in 38 of 55 English registration districts. Ibid.
97. This is a crude estimation, calculated on the assumption (following Marsden) that the child population represented one-sixth of the adult population. This gives figures of 51.2 per cent of the female child population at day school in metropoliatan Middlesex (other metropolitan

districts were 60.8 per cent Surrey, 69.3 per cent Kent, giving London an overall proportion of 54.1 per cent girls at day school). Bedfordshire, the centre of domestic lace making, had only 53 per cent of girls at day school. These figures are not definitive but they do give a rough guide to comparative access to schooling.

Author's calculations, based on summary tables. P.P. 1852-3, XC, pp.4-7.

98. ibid, p.cxlvi. Girls were further disadvantaged, it would appear, in their access to 'good' factory schools. And in the 29 'most efficient' factory schools described by Horner in 1839, girls made up only 41.2 per cent of the schools' enrolment (1,115 boys, 705 girls). P.P. 1839, XLII, p.4
99. Horner was under the impression that girls made up the largest proportion of child workers in the factories and would thus be the major beneficiaries of the educational provisions of the 1833 Act. P.P. 1834 XLIII, p.13
100. M.S.S. Pendleton, 1838, p.6 note 10.
101. Kirk, op.cit., p.34.
102. Newcastle, P.P.1861 XXI.2, p.177.
103. The educational clauses of the Acts appear to have been a disincentive to the employment of children in general and the proportion of boys in the factories also declined. The operatives themselves seem to have preferred to employ boys rather than girls, however, and the spinner-piecer system was a continuing incentive to employ them. Thus the numbers of boys working in the factories fell less sharply and remained at a higher level than that of girls (6.9 per cent in 1835, 4.9 per cent in 1862). Smelser, op.cit., p.201 note 3; Kirk, op.cit., p.34.
104. Fairbain, W. 'The Influence of Education', in Hicks, W.C.R., 'The Education of the Half-Timer', Economic History, February 1939, p.234.
105. P.P. 1870 LIV, p.145.
106. Laqueur, op.cit., p.99; P.P. 1845 XXXV, p.121.
107. M.S.S., ibid, p.3.
108. 159,542 boys, 173,306 girls. P.P. 1852-3 XC, p.7.



109. P.P. 1847-8 L, p.157.
110. There were around 1,490 boys and 2,700 girls on the books of night classes run in association with the Sunday schools in Manchester, Salford, Pendleton and Bury in the 1830s. Author's calculations from Reports of the Manchester Statistical Society.
111. Inspector Winder defined the work of the evening classes in these terms. Newcastle P.P.1861 XXI.2. p.237.
112. Kay-Shuttleworth, U.J., 'On the East Lancashire Union of Institutions having Evening Schools, on its Bearing on the Question of the Education of the Labouring Classes', Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, 1866, p.18.
113. Very few women were members of Sunday school Improvement Societies though "thousands of men" were members. Laqueur, op.cit., p.158. Male membership of the Mechanics' Institutes of England and Wales totalled 55,239 in 1851. Female membership (of all social classes) totalled 5,710. Women represented 8.2 per cent of the membership in Lancashire and Cheshire in 1851. Purvis, 'Hard Lessons', p.107.
114. In 1861 there were 53,633 boys at public day schools in Lancashire compared with only 45,180 girls. Girls represented an estimated 41.9 per cent of the day school population in 1833, and 42 per cent in 1851. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.2., p.596; P.P. 1835 XLI p.473; P.P.1852-3 XC, p.7. This increase may have been due to a decline in the popularity of private schools for girls. There was a general decline in the popularity of private schools after mid century. Gardner, op.cit.p.76. A consequent shift in enrolment patterns would have been more evident in the case of girls because of the relatively high proportion of female pupils at such schools.
115. P.P. 1843 XII, pp.347, 238.
116. Bond, R., Love the Brethren, prize essay of the Suffolk Agricultural Association, Ipswich, 1859. The joint prizewinner, Mr.Kersey-Cooper, presented the opposite view, however; "Nor need he (the labourer) be dissatisfied because he knows little beyond what his Bible teaches him, he knows enough for his own welfare and that is the truest

wisdom". Kersey-Cooper, G., Labor Praemium Ferat, Ipswich, 1859.

- 117. Newcastle,P.P. 1861 XXI.2., p.165.
- 118. P.P. 1847-8 L, p.27. Also see P.P. 1854-5 XLII, p.392; P.P. 1857 XXIII, p.467; P.P. 1861 XXI.2., p.148-9.
- 119. P.P. 1847 XLV, p.150.

	Boys		Girls	
	5-9	10-14	5-9	10-14
Norfolk	2.1	35.5	0.2	10.1
Suffolk	2.5	32.4	1.1	12.1
Lancs.	2.8	43.7	1.6	33.7

By 1871 the proportion of occupied boys aged 10-14 had increased in Norfolk and Suffolk to 35.6 per cent and 34.2 per cent of the age group respectively. Stephens, 'Education', op.cit, pp. 318-9. This was probably linked to a decline in the agricultural work of women.

- 120. As it was for 30,000 of 54,000 in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex in 1816-18. Marsden, op.cit., p.46.
- 121. In one school cited by Hedley, for example, the 'patroness' of the school had "found a more effectual stimulus to prolonged attendance in offering to procure desirable situations for the girls as servants". Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.2.,p.150.
- 122. Calculated from the 1851 returns, P.P. 1852-3 XC, pp.106-14. Glyde calculated that the percentage of the female population at day school was higher than that of the male population in the districts of Hoxne (8.61 per cent male, 9.31 per cent female), Bosmere (10.54 per cent male, 11.14 per cent female), and Samford (12.74 per cent male, 13.94 per cent female). Glyde, op.cit., p.234.
- 123. In Norfolk, girls made up the majority of pupils in National schools (7,079 girls, 6,809 boys) and the majority in Church of England schools in general (12,009 girls, 11,739 boys). In Suffolk, while girls were in the minority in the National schools (4,196 girls, 4,393 boys), they made up the majority of pupils in Church schools in general (9,653 girls, 8,952 boys).



Calculated from figures in P.P. 1852-3 XC, pp.cxlix (Norfolk), clii (Suffolk), and Stephens, op.cit., pp.332-333.

124. Children on the books of Church schools:  
Suffolk 13,802 boys 14,793 girls  
Norfolk 17,339 " 18,486 "  
Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.1., p.596.  
Girls were also in the majority at Church schools in the agricultural counties of Berkshire, Cambridgeshire, Dorset, Essex, Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, Oxfordshire, Rutland, Sussex, and Wiltshire. In agricultural counties where domestic industries such as lacemaking was important, girls' access to schooling remained very limited. In Bedfordshire, for example, girls were in a minority at the Church schools (4,897 boys, 4291 girls). ibid.  
See also the report of the Rev. J. Allen on schools in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire. P.P. 1843-4 XXXV, p.42. and Aldrich, R., 'Elementary Education and Child Employment in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Bedfordshire', Genovesi, G. et al (Eds.), History of Elementary School Teaching and Curriculum, University of Hanover, 1990.
125. See chapter 7.
126. P.P. 1867-8 XVII, footnote to p.202.
127. See chapter 7.
128. P.P. 1867-8 XVII, p.192.
129. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.2.,p.223.
130. Ibid, p.217. Girls made up 58 per cent of private school pupils in Yarmouth in 1858-9, and 55.9 per cent in Ipswich. Ibid.
131. Ibid, p.247.
132. Girls made up 55.9 per cent of the Sunday school population in Yarmouth in 1858-9, and 53.3 per cent in Ipswich. The male:female ratio of pupils at evening school in 1858 was 5.6 males to every one female in Suffolk, and 10.5:1 in Norfolk. Stephens, op.cit., p.364.
133. Aldrich includes Roman Catholic schools, Sunday schools and Ragged schools - all schools where girls outnumbered boys - at the "lowest" end of the spectrum. Aldrich, R., 'Educating our

Mistresses', History of Education, 1983, vol.12, no.2, p.96.

In the 'Class 1' category of schools, as designated by the Newcastle Commission, the proportion of girls was much lower than that of boys in the British schools (40.5%). This was much lower than the proportion of girls in the Church of England schools overall (48.7%). P.P 1861 XXI.1.,pp.592-3. As has been argued, the British schools were said to cater for children of a higher social rank within the working classes. They also tended to provide a more extensive curriculum (for boys) than did the National and Anglican schools. In short, girls also outnumbered boys in the poorer quality schools within the 'first class' category.

134. Newcastle, P.P. 1861.2.,p.247.

135. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.3., pp.95-6.

Ideals and Realities: the schools in practice from  
the later 1830s to 1870

The 'change in gear' which informed the purposes and provision of provided schooling from the 1830s was paralleled by significant changes in educational theory regarding the processes whereby class-cultural transformation was to be effected. The teaching of religion retained its prominent place within the curriculum, but was seen to be inadequate by itself for the development of the knowledge and understanding of the socio-economic principles on which society rested. Similarly, though it had provided an invaluable method through which to launch a system of mass schooling, the inefficiencies and inadequacies of the monitorial system demonstrated its limitations as a means of inculcating the disciplines and behaviours required for the orderly and efficient functioning of the state and the economy. Contradictions and tensions between the patterns of working-class life and family and community values and behaviours and those of civil society and economic production were to be resolved by teaching the children of the working-classes the spiritual truths of Christianity in combination with the socio-economic truths of political economy via a carefully selected and carefully trained corps of



professional teachers.

For girls, such purposes translated into curriculum models which emphasised their role within the family, with a provision of domestic skills training to educate girls towards a proper appreciation of, and efficiency of performance in, their natural duties and responsibilities as wives and mothers. This though was the theory, and as was seen in the discussion of curriculum provision in the schools in the early part of the century, the processes of implementation often denied the realisation of curriculum ideals.

There is a wealth of evidence available for this later period, enabling a much more extended examination of school practices across the variety of schools available to girls, and of their causes and consequences, but the same questions - what were girls taught? what did girls learn? - that provided the framework for chapter 5 also lie at the heart of this chapter. And, though an absence of autobiographical material presents continuing difficulties in evaluation of the experiences of schooling from the perspective of the girls themselves, Inspectors' reports (especially their criticisms of what they saw as the weaknesses of girls' schools), and the evidence contained in school log books do provide some insights into the every day



realities of girls' schooling. Reference is made to to the likely impact of schooling upon the behaviour and attitudes of girls, but overall conclusions are deferred to the final chapter of the study where the various developments in girls' schooling, and their causes and consequences are evaluated within the broad context of socio-economic and cultural developments between 1800 and 1870. The chapter ends, therefore, with an evaluation of the likely 'intellectual' attainments of girls, drawing on evidence of literacy levels to point to the very striking differences in male and female attainments between and within the two regions.

### Curriculum Policies

With the one exception of pauper boys in receipt of a workhouse education, for boys this rationale translated into the structure of schooling rather than curriculum content per se. The values and behaviours of capitalist society were to be learned predominantly through the hidden curriculum expressed in their reading books and through obedience to the rules and routines of schooling under the aegis of trained and efficient school masters. The efforts of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge to disseminate political economics to the adult male

working-class population through the Mechanics' Institute movement and through numerous pamphlets provided a useful model here, for why should not the schools also teach such 'useful knowledge' through an extension of the secular curriculum?

Kay-Shuttleworth was an early exponent of such policies. "The education afforded to the poor must be substantial", he argued in 1833, and should include 'elevating knowledge', the scientific basis for occupational processes, "the ascertained truths of political economy", "correct political information", and the benefits of 'correct' relations between capital and labour. (1) And though initially resistant to any distraction away from a central focus on the Bible as the principal means of instruction, even the National Society came to recognise the validity of criticisms directed against the system of religious education. Such criticisms were pragmatically based - school practices were often unproductive and ineffective and needed to be improved. As one educationist quoted in the 1835 report of the Select Committee on Education explained,

I know schools, with well-meaning but imperfectly educated directors, where the Bible is the school book, the only school book; ...In those schools every lesson,

however secular, arises out of and comes back to the Bible: for example, if the lesson should be the natural history of the bear, it will not be permitted to be entered into till the passage is read about the bears that tore the children that mocked Elijah ... in the great majority of cases (these methods) will operate in the way of disgust, by over-doing religious instruction, and the Bible and the reiterated instruction will all be thrown away whenever the pupil escapes to freedom.

(2)

A widening of the secular curriculum to include 'useful' knowledge would not only be beneficial in itself, it would support and sustain religious learning. According to the Rev. Edward Feild, Inspector for the National Society, such attitudes had become widespread by the early 1840s;

I found an increasing conviction that it is right and necessary to introduce more books of secular and general knowledge into our schools, if only for the purpose of elucidating and applying the Holy Scriptures. And I observed that where such books and subjects had actually been introduced there was no apparent deficiency of instruction, or knowledge in religious truths. (3)

Certainly, such views had been taken on board by the Diocesan National Society in Suffolk, and it was



recommended in 1841 that "the instruction in the first and second classes should not be confined to the Bible and the catechism" and that common reading books could be used "to much advantage". (4)

The common reading books produced by the Kildare Place Society for use in Irish schools provided a readily available and cheap medium for the transmission of knowledge of political 'truths' and political economy, with Easy Lessons in Money Matters written by Archbishop Whately becoming "the staple reading matter on political economy" (5) in the schools of both the National and British Societies. Goldstrom has described the content of these lessons as combining,

remarks about good habits to cultivate - diligence, forethought, temperance, frugality - and all the dangers of neglecting them - with stern warnings of the dangers to the working man (sic) of challenging the economic order. The laws of political economy were invoked to demonstrate the futility of trade unions and of government intervention in wage bargaining. (sic). (6)

Goldstrom quotes from the revision notes added by Dunn and Crossley to ensure correct teaching of these important principles;



1. Folly of thinking it unjust that one man should receive more than another for his labour.
2. Impossibility of regulating wages by law - has been attempted - always failed - why ...
3. Way in which labourer can improve his lot - increased skill - knowledge of best markets for labour - habits of forethought, temperance - economy.(7)

Biographies of fictional and living people, fables and fairy stories were also used to transmit the messages of political economy, but this did not preclude the inclusion of a wide range of content within the secular readers. Nor did the centrality of such 'useful knowledge' impose constraints on the subject matter of the secular curriculum, with subjects like history, geography, grammar, natural philosophy etc. being seen as valuable sources of the 'elevating knowledge' extolled by Kay-Shuttleworth. Thus a suggested curriculum model for elementary schools set out in the Minutes of the Committee of Council for Education in the late 1840s included a variety of subjects from horticulture and cottage economy to geography and history to money matters and political economy and popular astronomy.(8) Nevertheless, by the time of the Newcastle Commission, the value of teaching political economics was taken to be so evident that it was seen to occupy

a central position in the 'ideal' curriculum for boys' schools. As the Education Commission argued,

the knowledge most important to a labouring man is that of the causes which regulate the amount of his wages, the hours of his work, the regularity of his employment, and the prices of what he consumes.(9)

There was little suggestion, apart from in the special case of pauper boys and the very poor who attended the Ragged schools, that vocational preparation should be included in the curriculum of boys' elementary schools. That an increasing number of employments required an ability to read, write and do simple accounts was seen to exercise a 'co-operative' influence for the improvement of education, while the practice of appointing the best scholars to "a higher order of employments" with prospects for promotion was viewed as "a just appreciation and encouragement" on the part of enlightened employers, but it was not the business of the schools to train children to meet the needs of the economy or to foster occupational and social mobility. Though this latter may have been a "reasonable object in many cases", the "main object of the promoters of education", stated the Commissioners,

must be to teach the people to value it as a source of morality, enjoyment, and comfort, in the station in which the great mass of them are necessarily destined to remain. (10)

Mr. Winder dismissed the possibility of a direct link between schooling and the occupational requirements of factory work in no uncertain terms. "There is no desire on the part of the working-classes for what may be termed a professional education", he declared,

Indeed there is but little scope for any schemes of the kind. Factory work, which constitutes the great staple of labour in these districts (around Rochdale and Bradford), is for the most part mechanical, and it would be difficult to imagine anything more pedantic than to attempt to prepare children for 'doffing' and 'piecing' in a factory by a previous course of verbal instruction on the natural history and properties of wool and cotton. ... Neither is there a desire on the part of any class, high or low, for industrial training. I mean a mixture of actual work with teaching in the school. Such a plan would be ridiculously out of place in a district like Rochdale, ... there could be no hope that parents would submit to their children playing at that which is now a reality paid for in hard cash. (11)

Goldstrom has argued that the curriculum model identified above represented "a consensus of opinion



on the constituent ingredients of education for the poor had been reached" (12) by the 1840s. Whilst this was the case as far as the 'ideal' curriculum for boys was concerned, the statement demands qualification as far as parental views of schooling were concerned, (13) and, as will be shown was not necessarily carried directly into school practices. As far as the education of girls is concerned, however, (and they were equally members of the class of 'the poor' after all), the statement is so wide off the mark as to be nonsensical. Pedantic it may have been to prepare boys for their occupational roles "by specific theoretical instruction" as Mr. Winder declared, (14) but this is what was seen to be appropriate for girls. And though there may have been little desire for industrial training for boys, pauper boys excepted, 'industrial' training in domestic work was frequently seen to be the sine qua non of girls' education, especially by those educationists - and Kay-Shuttleworth was prominent amongst them (15) - who had a particular interest in female schooling.

As far as the girls were concerned, an educational rationale which viewed the aims of formal schooling as class-cultural transformation via the inculcation of the socio-economic principles of a just and moral society, translated into a primary emphasis on the



teaching and learning of domestic, rather than political economy. This informed the structure and organisation of their schooling, defined the 'moral' principles to be inculcated through the hidden curriculum of books, rules and routines and pedagogy, and also directly informed curriculum content. In a good school for girls, the pupils should be taught by a schoolmistress carefully selected to present the desired model of feminine behaviour and carefully trained in the spiritual and practical skills and knowledge needed to prepare girls for their future work as domestic servants to the bourgeoisie and as the wives and mothers of working men. Their day should be divided between secular studies, religious education and needlework and, ideally, would also include training in cleaning, cooking and other practical skills of housewifery, and they should be trained to be deferential, modest and discreet as befitted the feminine ideal. The ideal curriculum that had evolved from a mixture of taken for granted assumptions regarding natural abilities and destinations, from practical aspects of school organisation and resourcing, and from pragmatically motivated attempts to defuse hostility against, and attract support for, the formal education of girls, now took on a moral justification. The well-being of society was now to be protected and sustained by the

deliberate inculcation of a home-centred ethos which would turn girls away from the factories and the fields into the private environment of the home which God had decreed was the proper place of woman. Under the weight of evangelically inspired domestic ideologies, taken for granted gender divisions of labour assumed the moral force of divine authority, and the contingent curriculum of the earlier period became transformed into a vehicle for the spiritual and moral regeneration of society .

For the Reverend Feild of the National Society the physical and moral 'depravity' and the 'obliteration' of the distinguishing virtues and excellences of the female character could be repaired only by a combination of religious teaching and training in needlework, "that most important and essential part of their education", (16) and "a thorough acquaintance with household duties" became, for the Society "the principal requisite in the education of girls". (17) Mr. Fletcher of the British Society, while bemoaning prejudice against girls' learning grammar and geography, also defined their "sphere of real knowledge" as domestic economy. As he said in his report on British schools in 1847,

It would, I think, be found that the more the girls ... had their sphere of real knowledge extended, the more they would

become conscious of their ignorance. A good course of instruction in domestic economy,; the economy of food, fire, clothing, health and cleanliness is exceedingly wanting in these schools, and would prove the best possible antidote to indolence and vanity, while it would offer occasion for more healthful exercise of all faculties of the mind. (18)

These were sentiments that were very much in line with the expressed purposes of girls' schooling as defined by the management committee of the British Society in 1841. "The object of your female schools", it was stated,

is simply to qualify girls for the right discharge of these important duties (i.e mothers, servants, nurses) and the aim and end of all the instruction imparted is to make them at once intelligent and industrious, modest and humble, obedient and conscientious. (19)

Evaluated against all criteria - spiritual and moral, social and economic; the requirements of the female intellect, of the future welfare, comfort and security of girls and of the working-class family, the comforts of the servant employing classes, and the well-being of civil society - domestic economy was seen to score full marks, representing, in theory at least, the ideal way forward in the education of girls and the regeneration of society.



Yet though widely perceived by educationists to be the cornerstone of girls' education, the teaching of domestic economy as a specific subject was a rare inclusion in the curriculum of girls' schools. The 'experts' may have pronounced on the ideal curriculum, the Inspectors of schools may have been strenuous in their efforts to persuade schools to include practical skills training in cooking, washing and cleaning in the curriculum for girls (20) but, in the majority of schools needlework, and needlework alone was the mainstay of the domestic curriculum. Moreover, as the evidence from the education census showed, there were still many girls in many schools who were still not being taught needlework or any other 'industrial occupation' by mid century, with the content of their schooling being the same as that of boys. Thus in 1851, over half the total of girls in public schools and the great majority of girls in private schools (57 per cent and 69.6 per cent respectively) were not learning needlework at school (21), illustrating the existence of a considerable gap between theoretical models of what girls' schooling ought to be and the realities of school provision and educational experience.

A major factor in this was the inability of the Committee of Council established in 1839 under the secretaryship of Kay-Shuttleworth to prescribe on



details of curriculum content, school organisation and pedagogy. The role of the Council was predominantly administrative and supervisory, and though its control over the purse strings of government grants in aid of education gave it considerable authority in practice, the obligation to negotiate with the voluntary societies, particularly the National Society, forced the Committee to proceed with caution in its educational objectives. Hence, though Kay-Shuttleworth was convinced of the burning need to 'domesticise' the education of girls, the progress of educational 'reform' in this direction was necessarily slow, being dependent on the persuasive force of the Inspectorate, and, after 1846, on the gradual spread of 'good' female teachers, trained according to government specifications. It was not until the introduction of the Revised Code in early 1860s, however, that direct control could be exercised over curriculum content, and then only in the good schools in receipt of government funding. And, as in the earlier period, what was taught in the schools was determined as much by pragmatism and instrumentalism as by the ideological prescriptions of educational experts.

This was as much the case in the workhouse schools where the compulsory nature of schooling under the Poor Law Amendment Act denied any influence to

working-class perceptions of what constituted useful knowledge, and where the Inspectors had greater powers to direct the operation of schooling. (22) As the Poor Law Inspector for East Anglia from 1835 to 1838, Kay-Shuttleworth was directly involved in the development of schools and developed of a model system of workhouse education in the region. In his model, the three hours schooling per day prescribed by law became a 'tripartite' curriculum (23) composed of industrial, moral and 'intellectual' training designed to instill habits of industry and correct religious and moral habits, and to teach a child the skills he or she required "to discharge the duties of its station in life".(24) Equipping workhouse children with vocational skills appropriate to their social status would, Kay argued, break the vicious cycle of pauperism induced by what were seen to be inherited and inbred moral shortcomings. "If workhouse children", he wrote, "grew up educated in reading, writing and arithmetic only, they would be unfitted for earning their livelihood by 'the sweat of their brow'", (25) and, not surprisingly, he gave a high importance to the training of workhouse girls in domestic skills as a preparation for employment as domestic servants. The education of workhouse girls was to consist of three hours of instruction in "ordinary" school subjects each day, plus "such other

instruction ... as may fit them for service, and train them to habits of industry", (26) under the guidance of a skilled teacher.

In practice, although there were not the problems in finding the industrial work for girls that there were for boys, the provision of schooling in the workhouse was beset with difficulties which undermined drastically the educational value of even this limited curriculum. There was firstly a widespread prejudice against providing more than the most basic education for workhouse children ("only a pauper education must be given to workhouse children" (27)), and, in Mr. Ruddock's district, the inclusion of subjects such as geography and history in the curriculum was "so strongly objected to by the majority of Guardians" that few schools taught such subjects. (28) In the case of girls, however, hostility against their education in anything more academic than basic reading was said to be common. Mr. Carlton Tufnell reported in 1850,

I continually hear objections against giving girls the same amount of education as boys, and even the proposal to teach them geography is frequently treated as too palpably absurd to deserve the trouble of an answer. ... It is not uncommon to meet with respectable persons who seem imbued with the Mohametan idea, that it is quite



supererogatory to cultivate the intellectual faculties of females, or they will only go so far as to concede that they may be taught to read their Bibles, but nothing else. (29)

Problems of prejudice were further compounded by problems of teacher supply which, despite considerable effort towards improvement, (30) remained probably the most serious deficiency in the provision of workhouse education. Carlton Tufnell described the particular problems which led to Boards of Guardians often advertising in vain for suitable schoolmistresses.

we have a circle of difficulties to contend with. We fail to find good schoolmistresses because the instruction given in girls' schools is usually so inefficient: and the instruction in such schools is inefficient, because the schoolmistresses are so. (31)

Such problems were exacerbated by the large number of workhouse schools, many of them very small, and the low salaries, poor conditions of service, limited prospects and high demands of the job that led to a rapid turnover of teachers in the schools. (32) Thus in Norfolk, for example, teachers in the workhouse schools often lacked any sort of qualification for the post, and the former dressmakers, housekeepers and ladies' maids who became teachers to the girls



were often inadequate to the task and prone to frequent resignation. (33)

Legislation in 1844 and 1848 enabling Boards of Guardians to co-operate in the establishment of more efficient and economical district schools was largely ineffective. Only six such schools had been established by 1860, and though these replaced many of the privately owned schools into which children had been 'farmed out' and were thus contributory in raising standards, (34) the realities of schooling experience for the majority of children continued to fall far short of the quality Kay-Shuttleworth had envisaged.

There were some good schools, (35) but it is likely that many, possibly the majority of workhouse schools for girls were on a par with those described by Mr. Ruddock in 1849. In some of these he found that "the girls were not taught ciphering or writing", that the generally untrained female teachers were expected to take care of all the infant children while their mothers were working, and that 'industrial training' could well mean that the girls did the domestic work of the establishment. It was general, he stated, for girls to assist with the household work of the institutions and to work in the kitchens, and they were often kept busy "waiting upon the governor or matron, nursing the infants, knitting, repairs of

clothing, sewing, and more rarely, washing and ironing". Older and "more robust" girls, he stated,

are usually occupied in the mornings with the household work of their own or the female wards; ... this work not infrequently delays their presence in the schoolroom until 10 or 11 o'clock, ..., and the afternoon being usually devoted to mending and knitting, ... (these girls) did not really obtain more than 7 or 8 hours schooling weekly, instead of the eighteen ordered by the Poor Law Board. (36)

Workhouse boys might be similarly served, as Mr. Jelinger Symons found. The elder children of both sexes are often employed on the household work", he said, "cleaning shoes, knives and yards, long after and during morning school hours", (37) but frequently, difficulties in finding suitable work for them meant that the industrial and vocational element was missing from their schooling. Thus, in more than half the workhouse schools in the Eastern and Midland district of Mr. Bowyer at mid century, the boys had no industrial work at all and "in general they have no occupation beyond their lessons". (38)

This can be seen to have been a disadvantage to boys in depriving them of the opportunity to acquire very useful marketable skills. (39) If, as Mr. Bowyer claimed, a boy lacking such industrial training "can

neither dig, nor plough; is puzzled with a harness, and afraid of a horse" and was "entirely unfitted for an agricultural labourer", (40) his position in the overcrowded agricultural labour market of the eastern counties would have been an unenviable one. Nonetheless, when industrial training meant working in a local factory as it might well do, when it was confined to occasional labouring work on the land under the supervision of whoever happened to be an inmate of the workhouse, or consisted of stone-breaking and oakum picking or "imperfect" work in shoemaking, or a little tailoring, as was often the case, (41) the term 'vocational training' was as inappropriate as it was for girls doing the housework of the institution.

The variety of provision and quality in workhouse schooling makes it difficult to evaluate its overall worth to boys and girls. Some girls, as in the Cosford union school in Suffolk might become "remarkably skilful" and make "the most beautiful fancy work" that Mr. Bowyer had ever seen, while the girls at Plomesgate school learned the very useful skills of dairy work. (42) The years between 1847 to 1850 may have seen the improvements in workhouse education that Mr. Bowyer claimed. (43) It seems likely, however, that Louisa Twining's critical remarks to the Newcastle Commission regarding the



quality of workhouse education bore a general validity (44) that was particularly true with regard to the education of workhouse girls.

Mr. Bowyer claimed that the progress of the girls in the more academic areas of learning was "nearly parallel to that of the boys" but the table of comparative achievements he drew up for the years 1848 and 1849 indicate that the girls' curriculum was narrower than that of the boys', that their overall standards of achievement were lower, and that the differential between their progress and that of the boys was actually becoming greater. (Table Five )(45)

Table 5

<u>Boys</u> proportion % of boys under each head to total number				<u>Girls</u> proportion % of girls under each head to total number			
	1849	1848	increase		1849	1848	increase
children							
reading scriptures	48.2	33.4	14.8		39.4	25.5	13.9
ditto books of general information	40.3	21.8	18.5		25.8	15.4	13.1
no. of children writing on paper							
from copies	49.9	46.8	3.1		33.8	33.0	0.8
ditto on slates							
from dictation & memory	28.7	9.0	19.7		19.8	5.2	14.6



Arithmetic

children						
in addition	15.8	10.7	5.1	11.6	10.9	10.7
ditto in the						
other simple rules	19.6	19.5	0.1	17.1	15.3	1.8
ditto in compound						
rules & reduction	19.4	17.8	1.6	10.3	8.4	1.9
ditto in propor-						
tion & practice	5.9	4.8	1.1	1.6	0.8	0.8
no. of children						
in geography	23.3	12.0	11.3	12.4	6.0	6.4
no. of children						
in grammar	11.3	3.6	7.7	4.5	1.4	3.1
no. of children						
in history of						
England	4.7	3.6	1.7	1.3	1.1	0.2

Though the number of girls here considered was very slightly larger than that of boys, (46) in every curriculum area mentioned here they were outnumbered by the boys, most particularly in the higher categories of achievement and in subjects beyond the basic 3Rs, and in only two instances, simple and compound arithmetic, was the rate of increase in the number of pupils at that level higher than that of boys.

Mr. Carlton Tufnell was quite scathing about the standards achieved by girls in the more academic studies of the schools, recognising the long-term implications of their limited attainments. Because of

the poor quality of the schoolmistresses, he said, and prejudices against educating girls beyond a level of very basic literacy, very often,

the children get taught needlework, but nothing else. They are perhaps placed in servants' situations on first leaving the workhouse, but their ultimate destination is to swell already overcrowded ranks of needlewomen, and to reduce by competition the wages of this unfortunate class to the lowest liveable point ... It is a frequent remark, in London, that the situation of haberdashers' assistant, apparently so fitted for women, is almost entirely monopolised by men. But the occupants of such situations have to make, in the daily conduct of business, the most rapid calculations of the prices of articles sold, and not one girl in fifty, instructed by an ordinary schoolmistress, would be able to make such calculations with the necessary accuracy and dispatch ... This educational defect at once cuts them off from several occupations which would seem well adapted to females. (47)

In some instances the children from the workhouse attended local schools, but this did not necessarily imply access to a superior education. Teachers were said to "not always take the same pains with pauper children" and, in at least one instance, Guardians were reluctant to pay the extra penny per week that

was required for children to learn arithmetic. (48)

This means of avoiding the difficulties and demands of maintaining a school within the workhouse may well have been suggested by the practice of sending factory children to a local school as half-timers which became increasingly common after the legislation of 1844, for there were strong parallels between the education thought suitable for workhouse and factory children, with both groups being seen to require an education particularly adapted to their social class position within the lower ranks of the working classes. The 'ideal' model of schooling for factory children, like that of workhouse children, was based on the principle that the education most suited to their station in life was one that combined manual with mental labour in order best to "prepare the young person for the future work of life". (49) As in the case of workhouse children, 'expert' opinion placed great emphasis on the training of factory children in habits of obedience. Teaching children only to read and write was insufficient,

unless the result of such training was to have the effect of correctly instructing the child in its relative duties, and inducing him to conduct himself in accordance with those instructions, it might in reality prove to be injurious, rather than beneficial. (50)



For both groups of children, particularly (if not exclusively (51)) for boys, great importance was placed on the rules and routines of school organisation with a system of drill very reminiscent of the regulated organisation of the monitorial schools being advocated as producing habits of decorum and promptitude. (52) Similarly, Silver's comment on the education of factory children, that even its most eager supporters "had a clear notion of the limits beyond which education should not go, limits related to the 'natural' structures of society", (53), can equally well be applied to the education of pauper children. But notwithstanding their universal application to the education of workhouse and factory children, such 'natural' structures were particularly evident in the education thought to be suitable for factory girls. For boys the vocational training provided by their labour in the factories was thought to be sufficient, but for girls the necessity to channel them towards domesticity demanded the inclusion of extra, domestically oriented, 'vocational' training. (54)

The quality of education available to children under the legislation of 1833 was extremely variable, being dependent largely on the interest of the manufacturer and the availability of a good teacher (55) but, in general terms, the educational benefits



conferred by the Factory Acts were "rather illusory than substantial".(56) The development of the half-time system after 1844 contributed to much improvement in the education of factory children but, as before, the benefits to the pupils were not always as substantial as Chadwick and others were wont to claim, (57) and, in the case of girls were extremely likely to remain illusory rather than substantive.

Log book entries from a school described by the Inspector as being "one of the best girls' schools in Leeds" illustrate many of the problems that undermined the value of half-time schooling.

The number of factory children fluctuates; sometimes 40 at others less than 20. Several children are leaving this week for various reasons - some for change merely; others for work, others again to support a poor neighbour who has begun a dame school close by. Another family moving - few really stay a whole year.

The half timers are very slovenly. Sent three home dirty. Two of them have been visited and found very poor and distressed for want of food.

(half-timers) make rough work in the school and do not seem to carry away much knowledge

Very few of them can read when they come to school.

Find the half-timers coming late again. Parents careless about them.

Half-timers very dirty - Endeavoured to remedy it by sending a note of complaint to the Overseer. They have a very bad effect upon the school.

Complained to the overlooker, by a note, of the irregular attendance of the half-timers.

The school attendance is very irregular in numbers between the afternoon and morning owing to the greater number of half-timers serving the mill in the afternoon. (58)

And so the list could be continued, with the problems experienced by the half-timers adding to the burdens of the teachers in a vicious circle of deprivation and difficulties. As Mr. Winder reported to the Newcastle Commission,

In many public schools ... the interests of the half-timers are made to bend too much to those of the day scholars. The timetable is often so arranged ... that a half-timer may go a whole week or month with little or no instruction in writing or some other important subject ... The half-timers are, it is easy to see, very frequently looked on as a nuisance. Generally

speaking, they spring from a lower grade of society than the day scholars - have somewhat ruder manners and give more trouble ... Some of the schools in receipt of government aid, ... , refuse to take them at all. (59)

And if the factory girls knew little before they came to school, their chances of learning anything of substance through part-time school attendance were small indeed. Even leaving aside problems of lateness, irregular attendance and the tiredness consequent on their long and hard labour, (60) the time given to needlework in the schools for girls often meant that very little attention could be given to their more intellectual attainments. Mr. Winder said,

The time ... during which a half-timer is under effective instruction is very short indeed: short as it is, however, in the case of girls a large portion is abstracted for teaching sewing ... a mill girl may, during her afternoon turn, lasting a week or month as the case may be, have not more than an hour a day for intellectual instruction. Indeed, in not a few private, and some public schools, needlework takes up the whole afternoon and the girls may be left for a whole month without even having a reading lesson. (61)

The parents of the girls do not seem to have objected



to this, and, if the experience of one teacher of factory girls is anything to go by, were not above manipulating the attendance of their daughters to make sure this happened. As she complained:

It is most difficult to make half-timers take the same interest in their lessons ... This is particularly the case with those whose mothers work in the same factory and are anxious to have their needlework done by the girls when at school. Such mothers have contrived that the girls should come almost always at the hours when needlework is done so that the girls, though great dunces, rarely have a reading or writing lesson. (62)

Great dunces indeed they often were. Of 196 factory girls entering a "most meritorious" girls' school in Bradford, nearly half entered the school unable to read more than the alphabet and words of one syllable although more than 40 of them were aged 12 and over, and at another school visited by Inspector Winder he found a class of mill girls aged between eight and 13 of whom he said "they could not read at all". (63) As he explained,

Everywhere the lower classes are crammed with them (half-timers), passing the later period of their school time under the lowest grade of instruction, drudging hopelessly among children many years younger than themselves, and finally



leaving the school unable to read a simple narrative with understanding, writing a most miserable scrawl, and incompetent to do more than a simple addition or subtraction sum in arithmetic. (64)

What must also be borne in mind is that half-time girls were amongst the more fortunate factory girls. For it will be remembered that, despite the attempt to make schooling compulsory, many factory girls did not attend a day school at all. (65) Sunday schools were probably particularly important in providing or supporting basic education for factory girls but, as Laqueur has shown, a schooling confined to only a few hours per week could do little more than develop the basic skills of elementary literacy. At Stockport Sunday school, for example, factory children were less likely to reach the higher levels of the school than children in any other employment, being under-represented in the boys' writing classes and even less well represented in the advanced girls' class. (66) Evidence of standards of attainment amongst pupils at Birmingham New Meeting Sunday School tells the same tale, with children in full time employment having markedly inferior attainments in reading and writing, and with employed girls having the lowest attainments of all in writing. (67)

Sunday schools were not the only option; factory girls might also attend a night class to acquire

basic literacy skills or extend their attainments, but all too often the ubiquitous needlework dominated curriculum provision to the detriment of more intellectual learning. Mr. Thomas Wright of the Manchester Ragged School Union was in no doubt of the chief benefits to be gained from night school education for factory girls. "A sight that rejoiced his heart", he said,

was to see on a week night so many poor girls out of our cotton mills mending their clothes and knitting, etc. Upwards of five hundred girls, in the different schools, thus met to be taught useful household work, that would make them happier wives and mothers. (68)

Similar initiatives were taken in other industrial towns, with, for example, benevolent middle-class ladies in Leeds opening the Leeds Factory Girls' Sewing School in 1852 to teach needlework in preparation for the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood. As well as needlework, the school also sought to raise the moral and spiritual standards of factory girls by exposing them to the example and influence of "better educated people". (69) In the evening classes, in the factory schools, in the Sunday schools - all the 'compensatory' forms of schooling available to factory women - there were clear demarcations between 'male knowledge' and

'female knowledge' (70) with needlework taking a prime place for the purposes of socialisation and practical 'vocational' preparation.

It was in the charity schools for girls and the industrial schools that the domestic curriculum reached full flower, with these schools coming closest to what 'expert' opinion defined as the best sort of education for working-class girls. At the Jubilee Charity school in Manchester, typical of many elsewhere, the girls learned housework, kitchen work, laundry work, needlework and very little else. With a weekly timetable crammed to capacity with 'vocational' work, with Church attendance and religious studies taking up almost the whole of Sunday, and with the importance of the needlework as a source of income for the school requiring that "a large proportion of time. .. be devoted to its practice", (71) there was little time available for more academic studies. "The time available for ordinary school lessons", remarked the Management Committee,

is necessarily short in an industrial establishment like the present, and therefore regulations should be made, whereby the children engaged in housework should not entirely lose the advantage of their ordinary lessons, when they happen to be detained out of school during the lesson



period. They ought at least to read, and to go through the lessons prepared out of school on the preceding evening. (72)

The Management Committee was clearly very caring of the welfare of the girls in the school, recommending the encouragement of "cheerful singing", an increase in the size of the playground, long walks and "calisthenic exercise" to safeguard the girls' health. For, as was said,

it is impossible to fit girls for useful service unless due attention be paid to their health and physical development, by means of well directed exercise. (73)

Effort and achievement was also encouraged, with girls being promoted to the first class of the school only if they had "distinguished themselves in two, at least, out of the three sections of employment, viz., school studies, domestic duties and needlework", and with "special encouragement and opportunity" being given to girls who showed promise in cookery. (74) The girls may have shown "considerable proficiency" in reading, scriptural knowledge, arithmetic, dictation etc. as reported in the Manchester Guardian of July 1868, (75) but this was incidental to the main purpose of their schooling. In short, everything in the school was directed towards the production of skilful, obedient and hard-working superior servants



for the middle-classes. (76)

Industrial schools seem to have catered for girls from rather lower social background than those in the charity schools, but there was often very little to differentiate curriculum content between the two types of school. In girls' schools of industry such as the one at Finchley, birthplace of the widely used domestic manual, and the Royal School for girls at Windsor, which was sponsored by Queen Victoria, girls again spent most of their time learning domestic skills in preparation for employment in service and the duties of the home. At Windsor, for example,

it being understood to be her Majesty's wish that the girls should be so trained in the school as to fit them for service, and to enable them to discharge in after life the duties of wives and mothers, to the usual instruction in religious and secular knowledge a good deal of teaching in domestic economy is added. Besides making their own clothes and those of the boys, they do ... all the housework of the schools - the cleaning, cooking, washing, and baking ... on one day in the week the lessons of the girls are in domestic economy; on another their industrial work consists in cooking 'cottage dinners'. (76)

It was claimed that the large portion of time devoted to industrial occupations had no effect on their attainments in other areas, but, notwithstanding an

assumption that girls' capabilities naturally were not compatible with high attainment, it is difficult to see how this was managed with only half the day being given to lessons, (including lessons in domestic economy) and half being spent in cooking and household work. (77)

Though a number of the public day schools for girls adopted various strategies to incorporate a domestic orientation into the curriculum, practical domestic training, of the sort conducted in the workhouse, charity and industrial schools was comparatively rare, and in the majority of schools girls were not taught domestic subjects to the extent that was thought desirable. Kay-Shuttleworth may have felt this to be essential for the right education of girls, Inspector Cook may have been strenuous in his attempts to persuade school managers to introduce practical domestic training into the schools for girls, Queen Victoria herself may have given this a prime importance and the lack of such training may have been generally deplored by the middle-classes, but the fact remained that most schools lacked the necessary financial resources to implement the domestic curriculum. Inspector Norris, a tireless advocate of practical domestic training for girls, tried to persuade school managers that practical domestic training need not be expensive,

There is frequently a notion on the part of school managers that an industrial department would involve them in much additional expense ... the simpler and cheaper the apparatus the better will be the training because the girls are less likely to be spoiled for such accommodation as they will probably find when go out into service, and are much more likely to learn to be inventive and self reliant. (78)

His suggestion, that arrangements should be made for girls "to take part in turn in the household work of the parsonage or the teacher's residence", (79) was one that was adopted by a number of schools, but there were further obstacles to such initiatives, not least the fact that parents objected to them. The father who complained to the mistress of Ewell girls' school that he paid for his daughter to learn rather than to dust the school (80) was not alone in his views. As Inspector Cumin found, parents "insist that they send their children to school in order to get that kind of knowledge which they cannot themselves teach them", (81) a view that even Mr. Norris found reasonable. It was difficult, he said, to reconcile parents to the idea that their daughters should do housework while attending school,

In many cases there is much that is reasonable in what the parents urge. Their daughters' clothes wear out much sooner if



they are employed in industrial work; more time is occupied than can be spared from home duties; the mother is really more competent to teach such things than the teacher. (82)

In practice, therefore, despite the perceived importance of domestic economy in the education of girls, it did not become widespread as a practical subject until supported by grant payments under the Revised Code in the 1870s and 1880s, (83) and only just under 6 per cent of girls were being taught 'industrial occupations' other than needlework in the Newcastle survey. (84)

Attempts to overcome such 'obstacles' were made by the Committee of Council through the training of teachers, with a major element of domestic economy within the curriculum of the female colleges. Thus, for example, teachers were trained to give theoretical instruction in domestic economy (85) and were encouraged to combine its teaching with a wide variety of other subjects. Arithmetic could be taught, the Inspectors suggested, by adding up shopping bills and calculating the amount of material needed to make articles of clothing; writing could be on topics such as 'how to boil a leg of mutton, general duties of a cook, on washing, a parlourmaid's duties' and so forth. Even chemistry could be learned, or so it was said, by watching cookery



demonstrations performed by the mistress on a portable stove. (86)

Needlework, however, was fast becoming the prime element in the girls' curriculum, with, by the time of the Newcastle survey, an enormous increase in the teaching of sewing in private as well as public schools. Though nearly half the girls in the predominantly mining district inspected by Mr. Jenkins still escaped the sewing, around three-quarters of girls in attendance at day school were now so occupied for part of their time in school. (87) Improved resources, with increasing grant payments in aid of education to inspected schools, and the relative cheapness and easy availability of female teachers (88) may well have been contributory here, but the influence of the Committee of Council supported by grant payments, was particularly significant. Thus in 1846 practical inducements added to the persuasive power of the Inspectorate when needlework was made a requirement for female pupil teachers. Indeed, after 1862, payment of grant was withheld altogether if the girls were not taught plain sewing, and in the case of one school, that of Rochdale Parochial, this had serious if unintended consequences. Here, the organisation of the timetable did not permit the inclusion of needlework without major upheaval, and fear of losing the grant

threatened, and probably caused, the total exclusion of the girl pupils from the school. (89) In general, of course, the effect of such regulations was not as drastic, but large numbers of provided schools, those already in receipt of grant and those which aspired to grant-earning status, were forced to include needlework in the curriculum for girls whether they wished it or not.

The significance of this inclusion of needlework in the 'model' curriculum for girls' schools, and the extent to which this became accepted, is often not recognised, but it had important and far-reaching implications for the female pupils of the schools. It was not simply that the needlework pointed girls towards domestic pursuits and values, but also that, in terms of actual school practices, it diverted both time and attention away from other subjects of study. In many schools girls were part-time seamstresses and only part-time scholars, and their more academic studies suffered in consequence. As Mr. Fletcher noted in 1847, in the grant-aided British schools for girls,

it may be said that the instruction of the majority of the children is not so much in reading, writing and arithmetic; as in reading, writing and needlework. All efficient instruction in the branches which yet remain to be noticed is restricted to a

minority ... who attain to a position in the monitors' classes, or in the upper sections of a simultaneous school. (90)

This was not, however, a matter for concern. The 'natural' capabilities and future occupations of their gender made more academic accomplishment unnecessary for girls - "intellectual pursuits and intellectual power are by no means so necessary" for females asserted Inspector Kennedy (91) - and an ability to sew was more important than the acquisition of any 'higher' branches of knowledge. "In girls' schools", stated Inspector Arnold,

there must always be a branch of industrial occupation indispensably professed - instruction in needlework: if this is given ill, if the girls cannot do plain work well, there is cause for complaint. It is no excuse that time has been occupied in teaching other branches of instruction well, if one indispensable branch has been neglected. (92)

In drawing comparisons between provided schools in England and those in Germany and Switzerland, Inspector Cook evaluated girls' education in very positive terms. Though German and Swiss boys might be receiving an extended education far superior to that available to English boys, the best schools for English girls were doing an excellent job.



Here we have very much the advantage over all I have seen or heard of other countries. Whether we consider the moral and religious training, the industrial instruction, the discipline or the general education of girls, in each of these points I do not hesitate to express my conviction, that the best schools in London are superior to the very best schools on the continent.(93)

The division of time between industrial and 'academic' education gave girls' schools a positive advantage over those for boys in Inspector Norris's opinion, because of the moral benefits thus conferred.

Independently of the practical value of skill of needlework, it would be well worth while for the sake of the effect on the girls' characters to occupy half their time in school in this way. No one can have marked the quiet domestic aspect of one of our better girls' schools when arranged for needlework, ... and that most wholesome union, which a boys' school seldom presents, of industry with repose, of a cheerful relaxation of mind, with the most careful and decorous order, without seeing at once that it is here rather than during the morning lessons that the character of the future woman is formed.(94)

He described the curriculum requirements of girls:



A knowledge of the Holy Scripture, and the power of reading aloud fluently, and of expressing themselves readily and correctly on paper, and a sufficient acquaintance with arithmetic to enable them to add up bills and keep household accounts, are of course essentials. But next to these ... knowledge of household matters should be given, with practical training if possible, and if after this there remains time for more general information, then let geography and history be added. (original emphasis) (95)

There was more than just 'expert' opinion to support this curriculum model for girls' schools. Not only was an academic education unnecessary for girls, it could be positively harmful. According to Inspector Moncreiff, the belief was common that "a high standard of general instruction" denied the "sound moral and industrial training of girls", and "it is better and safer for girls to be confined to a very narrow circle of knowledge".(96) The many prejudices against providing girls with anything other than a very limited education at best were summarised in an appendix to Mr. Cumin's report to the Newcastle Commission. According to the Rev. G.W.Proctor,

Already we hear complaints from all parts of the country of the difficulty of procuring domestic servants, and of their unwillingness to do many of the details of

household work ... Respectable Christian mothers of humble life who would have their daughters live a modest, virtuous, useful life of industry, complain to me that the present system of female education is placing many new and unlooked for difficulties in their way. All this is greatly decreasing the number of women who are fitted to make a home for a handicraftsman or a labourer comfortable and happy as his wife and the mother of his children. In my own experience I have found it makes young girls impatient of and dissatisfied with home restraints and home circumstances, more attractive to the seducer of higher social position, and more susceptible of the influence of his refinement of manner and of tastes, and so more easily his victim. (97)

If 'over' educating girls in intellectual knowledge was fraught with dangers, needlework had many practical and immediate merits. Though it might not be as important a source of school funds as it had been in the earlier part of the century, it could still be profitable, and useful, (98) and it was popular with parents. The occasional mother might object - A Mrs. Townsend accused the mistress of Norbiton National school of "taking money under false pretences", saying that she sent her children to school to learn to read and write and do arithmetic and that "any mother with common sense could teach

her child needlework" (99) - but most parents seem to have concurred with the educational establishment in evaluating needlework as a useful skill. In their very different ways, Miss Hope and the feminist Barbara Bodichon identified the main determinants of parental attitudes towards the education of their daughters - the practical benefits to be gained. In giving evidence to the Newcastle Commissioners, Miss Hope explained,

In estimating the relative importance of needlework in a girls' school, it must not be forgotten that it is to this that many of these young sempstresses will have to look for their livelihood, or for advancement in life, and that few will have any opportunity for improvement after they leave school. A girl goes to service, probably, immediately on leaving school, and the degree of skill she has gained with her needle may make all the difference whether she remains a drudge all her days, or rises to the highest rank in that line of life. A nursery maid or housemaid, who is handy with her needle, is open to promotion as a head nurse or lady's maid; one who is not so will stick where she is, however good a grammarian or geographer she may be.

With what seems to have been a fairly realistic appreciation of the realities of life for the working-class female, Miss Hope also pointed out that



skill in needlework would enable a wife "to add considerably to the earnings of the household", as well as providing a means of subsistence "in the not infrequent contingency of widowhood". "While many girls will have to depend upon needlework for their bread, all ought to be able to fall back on it if necessary". (100)

Barbara Bodichon lamented the deficiencies of girls' education, attributing this state of affairs to a lack of occupational incentives sufficient to convince parents that educating daughters might be a worthwhile investment. "Fathers will not expend capital in training girls as teachers, or in any other profession;" she argued,

as the girl may marry and leave her profession, after exercising it a short time, or before exercising it at all ... Fathers can hardly be blamed, in the present state of society, for expending time and money on their boys, and neglecting their girls, for we must not expect in the masses the highest motives will ever rule. If girls' schools are to be good, whatever schemes government may have of prizes, endowments, and distribution of minor state appointments on educational grounds must apply to women as well as men. We must have women admitted into all the educational offices, and the profession of teacher, made for women as well as for men,



a progressive one. (101)

In short, both recognised the corresponding links between the economy and education in determining parental attitudes towards the value of educating their sons and daughters and the nature and content of what they should learn in school. The majority of girls, particularly country girls, were destined to be domestic servants, and there was little point in educating them to a level beyond what was required, especially as there was still considerable prejudice against an 'over-educated' servant girl. Inspector Fletcher commented in 1847,

It is not unusual to find ladies ... objecting against these branches of instruction (geography and grammar) altogether: as tending to give the children notions above their station, and encouraging an indisposition to the healthy labour and domestic disciplines of household work. (102)

And even if, as the Rev. Watkins rather optimistically believed, the "narrow mindedness" that caused such taunts as "will geography help your housemaid to scour the floor?" had largely disappeared by mid century, (103) there was still little incentive for girls to learn such subjects. While attendance at school could be the means of obtaining a first post, and while a limited education

was desirable as evidence of training in the 'correct' social and moral habits and some ability to sew, any extension of 'academic' learning beyond basic literacy was both unnecessary and potentially damaging to job prospects. As the Rev. J.Pocklington of the Salford Ragged and Industrial schools explained,

In employing servants we did not ask whether they could read, write or cipher for the sake alone of these acquirements - but simply as a means of understanding whether the servant could be regarded as moral, trustworthy and industrious. (104)

There was one exception to the general rule, one occupation that girls might aspire to if they were educated and intelligent - and of the right moral calibre for the post (105) - and that was teaching. Teaching was always a favoured occupation for women - though not necessarily one they enjoyed (106) - and with the establishment of the pupil-teacher scheme in 1846, a professional career was opened up to girls which placed some premium on intellectual attainment and provided "at the public expense, ..(a) general education". (107)

As would be expected, gender ideologies informed the content of training and conditions of work, with female pupil teachers being required to be competent

needlewomen, often expected to assist in the cleaning of the school and receiving lower payments than their male counterparts. Nonetheless, able and ambitious girls (and those with stamina) were quick to take advantage of the opportunities thus offered and by 1860, female pupil teachers outnumbered their male counterparts. (108).

The benefits of the scheme to girls must not be exaggerated. The stringency of the entry conditions would have disqualified many capable girls from less than 'respectable' backgrounds and those in attendance at a poor quality schools - as many girls were. There is also evidence of prejudice against the "unnecessary accomplishments" that were seen to unfit female pupil teachers "for domestic life", and G.W.Proctor claimed in his submission to the Newcastle Commission that this caused problems of recruitment and training.(109) But, as the journal The Pupil Teacher enthused, the scheme did open up novel opportunities for occupational mobility through education for girls from working-class backgrounds;

Many a country girl will now, by becoming a pupil teacher, be first in her family, for many generations, to be accounted of a higher grade than that of peasants and domestic servants. (110)

That Inspector Cook could claim that the mistresses



of National schools included women from higher social class groups, something that was never suggested for male teachers, (111) is indicative of the paucity of occupational opportunities available to women and girls and of the very few material incentives to intellectual instruction and attainment for females. There may have been more employments open to girls had more of them achieved what today we would regard as the most minimal levels of education - a Liverpool employer complained of the frequency with which he was forced to reject female applicants for work because of their inability to read and write, and the Newcastle Report contains similar references to girls' unsuitability for work because of their limited capabilities in arithmetic (112) - but as regards the employment prospects of the majority of girls in rural East Anglia and the industrial regions of Lancashire there was very little to counterbalance the immediate value of a curriculum oriented to domestic accomplishments.

This is not to suggest a total unanimity between parents and the public schools on the nature and content of girls' schooling. Parents wanted their daughters to learn fancy needlework and crochet rather than the plain needlework taught in the schools, and complained of the quality and insufficient quantity of the work done, factors



which, together with the convenience of the more flexible arrangements, continued to make private schools popular for girls. (113) As Matthew Arnold complained,

The parents also, in general, seldom have much value for plain needlework, nor do the mothers teach it at home to their daughters; the only kind of needlework which the parents admire, and which the children are anxious to practice, is crochet-work and ornamental needlework; this is comparatively useless, and managers and teachers should, in my opinion, utterly prohibit it in school. (114)

Some public schools were, however, prepared to accommodate parental demands, with the inclusion of fancy needlework in the curriculum being a lesser evil than the non-attendance of girls. Bradford Parochial school, for example, taught embroidery to older girls to encourage attendance. And though this was said to be "outrageous to many ears!", it was also held to be effective,

instruction in fine work is not to be had elsewhere in the place. Thus the parents are induced to continue their children at school, first up to eleven by the prospective advantage, and then beyond eleven by the actual advantage. (115)

And though the expectations of Inspectors would have

inhibited the recording of such practices in school log books, the giving over of school time to the girls' own crochet and fancy work was probably not unusual. At St. Andrew's school in Derbyshire, for example, fancy work was permitted on Wednesday and Friday afternoons, with the other three afternoons being devoted to plain needlework. (116)

Parents also wanted the assistance of their daughters with housework and child care, and some schools met parents half way by adopting a pragmatic approach to attendance requirements. Mount Pleasant school in Liverpool, for example, sought to reduce disruption to school routines by permitting regular time off.

In consequence of the inconvenience arising in the school from girls absenting themselves without adequate reasons, a resolution was passed that the mothers be requested to fix a morning or afternoon in the week on which their daughter stays at home. (117)

G.W.Proctor even made arrangements for pupil teachers to have time off "to assist in the family washing and house cleaning" (118) and it is very likely that a blind eye was turned frequently to the absence of girls helping with domestic work at home. (119)

Schools were also likely to be sympathetic towards

the need for girls to take care of younger siblings, sometimes admitting young infants into the girls' schools to encourage the attendance of their older sisters. (120)

The voluntary context of schooling was encouraging very different developments in the boys' schools, with a move towards 'rational' schooling, posited on criteria of efficiency in instruction (121) underpinning a curriculum modelled on effective teaching and learning of 'academic' subjects. Thus, to the 'contingent' curriculum of the 1830s, where an absence of suitable industrial work for boys encouraged the inclusion of extra subjects to keep them purposefully occupied while the girls were busy with sewing, was now added the determining influence of rationalisation whereby schools sought to demonstrate to parents that they could and would provide the education that parents sought for their sons. And, as we have seen in the previous chapter, what increasing numbers of parents wanted for their sons was a sound academic education. The sharply increasing differential between what was seen to constitute a good education for the two sexes is illustrated by Inspector Cook's description of what a boy aged twelve of "fair average attainment" would have learned. Such a boy would be able:



1. To read fluently, and with intelligence,... any works of general information ...
2. To write very neatly and correctly from dictation and from memory, and to express himself in tolerably correct language....
3. To work all the elementary rules of arithmetic with accuracy and rapidity. ...
4. To parse sentences, and to explain their construction.
5. To know the elements of English history....
6. (he would also have a knowledge of) physical and political geography ...
7. The elements of physical science, the laws of natural philosophy and ... natural history ....
8. The principles of political economy ...
9. Drawing ...

That any addition could be advantageously made to this list I do not believe, considering the age of the children; nor am I of the opinion that any of these subjects could be omitted without practical detriment to the schools.(122)

Inspector Cook did not describe what the average twelve year old girl might be expected to learn in a good school, but the tone of his reports over the years makes it clear that a practical training in domestic skills and needlework would have been prominent in the curriculum of such a school. (123)



Again, it must be emphasised, the argument must not be taken too far. Very few boys from the working classes remained at school until the age of twelve, particularly in agricultural districts, and the clientele of the British schools for boys, where this sort of expanded curriculum was most evident, was likely to include numbers of children from higher social groups. In the majority National schools a continuing emphasis on the preparation of children for their God-given place in the social order imposed limitations on the amount and quality of intellectual instruction thought appropriate for the working classes, and though eager for secular education, few parents saw much immediate value in an extended education for their sons. The Norfolk parent who wanted her children to learn basic skills and not "nonsensical learning" (124) was not exceptional, as the Newcastle Commissioners reported. But as Mr. Winder found in the industrial districts, parental pride could support higher attainment,

Reading, writing and arithmetic are ... the chief things required ... In nine cases out of ten, however, if the child makes good progress in the school, its parents are proud of its success, and in those schools, where it is the custom, willingly provide the necessary books and pay a higher fee, when those classes are reached in which

higher instruction is given. (125)

It is reasonable to assume, though Mr. Winder's remarks are not specific on this point, that the child to whom his remarks refer was a boy. For, as the results of the Newcastle survey showed very clearly, a far smaller proportion of girls than boys were studying subjects such as history, geography and grammar in the public schools surveyed. The following remarks were made by Mr. Jenkins with reference to Wales but his remarks have a general relevance. As he said:

A comparison of the male and female columns shows that the differences in their respective centesimal proportions increases in favour of males as we progress from the rudimentary to the more advanced branches of school instruction - proving that, from whatever cause, the education of girls is not carried out to the same extent as that of male scholars. (126)

Only a relatively small proportion of boys were studying higher subjects, (127) and the initial curriculum requirements of the Revised Code, based as they were on the 3Rs (and needlework for girls) can hardly be said to have constituted an extensive education. But in the model schools and other 'good' schools (128), where the curriculum did include higher subjects of study for boys, and needlework and

domestic economy for girls, were those which were setting the lead for others to follow. Different curriculum patterns were being drawn for the two sexes, and the first steps on very different paths were being taken. Social pressures, axiomatic assumptions about natural abilities and future destinations, and the steering hand of the Committee of Council served as guides along these diverging paths. Boys and girls were different, their roles in society were different and they were therefore to be taught different things in different ways. Differential achievement was the inevitable consequence of an education specifically designed to produce such a result.

The example of mathematics, the quintessentially 'male' subject, illustrates this process well. It was assumed that girls were 'naturally' less able than boys in this area and that their needs did not extend much beyond sufficient arithmetic to cope with shopping, making patterns for needlework and so on. The 'higher branches' of mathematics were therefore defined as irrelevant for girls and they were not expected to learn them. The Reverend Feild of the National Society reported that in many instances, particularly in girls' schools, "arithmetic was merely an amusement of no practical use"; a situation arising, it would appear, from the view that:



if it be said that a knowledge of arithmetic is of little importance to poor children, and especially to girls, surely, then, time need not be wasted on it. (129)

Indeed, in some schools time was not 'wasted' on it. In the girls' school of industry at Eye in Suffolk in the 1840s, for example, girls were not permitted to learn arithmetic, and of the girls examined by the Inspector, none could manage even a simple addition sum. (130) And in schools visited by Inspector Noel in 1841, one teacher explained "that she thought girls should not learn beyond compound addition in arithmetic, and she taught them no further", while another "accounted for the fact that none of the girls learned arithmetic, by stating that in her opinion it was unnecessary for them".(131)

Female pupil teachers, however, were permitted a lower standard of attainment in this area, (132), and female teachers in training were not taught to the same level as their male counterparts (133) and, as Mr. Carlton Tufnell recognised, the standard of arithmetic in girls' school often suffered from a vicious spiral wherein, because the teachers knew little "their pupils know less". (134) Mr. Marshall made the same point, though citing the "remarkable exceptions" where arithmetic was well taught to girls, he said,



I can by no means admit that female teachers are necessarily inferior to males in teaching this subject. There are, no doubt, many of the former who have made up their minds that this supposed inferiority is in the nature of things, and to be accepted as inevitable. To such faint hearted teachers I would suggest, that if they teach arithmetic imperfectly, and with feeble results, it is not because the science of numbers presents any special or insurmountable difficulty to female students, but because they were badly taught in their own school days, and have not yet attempted to remove this original defect. (135)

But there was little incentive for female teachers to overcome their their "torpor" (as Mr. Marshall described it) as regards their capabilities in this area, not least because few parents seem to have been concerned about their daughters progress in arithmetic. "Arithmetic does not seem to be at all in demand" commented Inspector Fitch in his investigation of private schools in the industrial regions, "mothers do not care for it, or put any questions concerning it", (136) and the schoolmistress in Wakefield who changed the timetable so that arithmetic came before instead of after needlework in the hope that "the parents will perhaps allow their children to stay until dismissal in consequence of

the needlework coming last" (137) was in no doubt as to their order of curriculum priorities. Nor, it would seem, were the Inspectors particularly concerned about a lower standard of achievement on the part of girls. The absence of any arithmetic at all was viewed as "a marked deficiency" in a girls' school, but low standards of attainment in this area appear to have been accepted as a fact of life. Though Mr. Alderson, for example, found the arithmetic of girls in attendance at British and Wesleyan schools to be unsatisfactory in character and limited in extent, the quality of the girls' needlework was more prominent in his attention:

It has been rather the exception to find them aiming at more than the compound rules. That in this branch of instruction they should display an inferior capacity to that of the generality of boys is to be expected (my emphasis); but their knowledge of it, however humble, should at least be sound and correct.

Sewing occupied from three to five afternoons a week in the girls' schools, but, Mr. Alderson remarked,

I should hardly think that the latter proportion is too large, when the extreme importance of this part of a girl's education is considered; unless, indeed, under special circumstances, it may be advisable to devote more time than this

arrangement would permit to raising the standard and tone of instruction in other branches.(138)

One doubts whether this poor standard in arithmetic qualified as a special circumstance.

There is considerable evidence within Inspectors' reports of girls' inferior performance in this area of the curriculum. While boys in the Norwood school of industry were well taught, for example, "there were not a dozen girls who were able to perform sums in compound division", and though the teaching of arithmetic to boys at the Kirkdale school of industry was poor, it was almost non-existent in the girls' branch of the school.(139) At Bethnal Green school for girls "the arithmetic did not extend beyond enabling two or three ... to do a sum in simple subtraction ... (and) to add correctly two small sums of money".(140) And so the examples could be multiplied, with those schools where girls were well taught in this area being seen as "remarkable exceptions" (141) to the general picture of limited teaching and learning.

When direct comparison of standards achieved by boys and girls can be made, as for 1847 when Inspectors Allen, Cook and Moseley compiled detailed tables for their respective districts, the poor performance of girls is very evident. Whereas, on average, 13.5 per



cent of boys were studying compound arithmetic, only 8 per cent of girls were so doing; where just over 5 per cent of boys had reached a level of 'proportion and practice', only 0.5 per cent of girls had; and while 0.6 per cent of boys were learning fractions, no girls at all had reached this level of attainment. (142)

Inspector Cook commented on the progress he had seen in this area of the curriculum between the 1840s and the later 1850s. By 1857 all schools in his district of Middlesex, except for a few Ragged or Industrial schools, were teaching arithmetic up to the level of compound rules to boys and girls, and, as he said,

When I look back a few years, and remember that only a small proportion of boys in the first classes of the largest National schools could write down sums correctly, and work them afterwards, without assistance; and that it was then very unusual to find a girls' school in which the first class could make out an easy washing bill, I feel more gratified by the progress than surprised at the defects that might exist. (453)

Gratified Inspector Cook may have been, but, hampered by prejudice and indifference and a self-perpetuating cycle of ignorance, the progress evident in girls' schools was very slow with an apparently permanently



fixed ceiling on their levels of achievement. Thus, though an average of 66.9 per cent of girls in attendance at public schools were learning arithmetic by the early 1860s (71.1 per cent boys), no girls in any of the districts surveyed were returned as studying algebra or geometry, though 1.5 per cent and 1.4 per cent respectively of boys were so doing. (144) In the private schools, only 32.8 per cent of girls were learning arithmetic (34.9 per cent boys), and again, no girls at all were included in the returns as studying algebra and geometry. (145).

This pattern of differential achievement also applied to a wide range of other subjects, whether by reason of time spent on needlework, poor teaching, more erratic attendance on the part of girls, or their perceived intellectual inferiority. The reports of Inspectors Allen, Cook and Moseley showed that, on average, boys achieved higher standards than girls in writing as well as arithmetic (though the girls reading was rather better (146)) and, as we have previously seen, girls access to the higher subjects of the curriculum was considerably more limited than that of boys. It seems likely, therefore, with the possible exception of the reading, that Mr. Allington's conclusion that "girls fail much more frequently than boys in all subjects and in all standards", though made with reference to Church of

England schools for girls in Suffolk in 1869, had a general applicability over both time and place.(147)

Inspector Allington attributed this state of affairs to "previous neglect" and to "the comparative indifference with which even sensible parents still regard the education of their daughters", - "it does not necessarily follow that they are inferior to boys in capacity" he said, (148) - but though clearly important as contributory factors, indifference and neglect cannot be said to be the most significant elements in this picture of differentiated achievements and low female attainment. Even in the best schools for girls the level of academic study was expected to be lower than in the best schools for boys, with teachers being trained to perpetuate differentiated achievement. The college courses for female teachers in training contained fewer subjects studied at an easier level, and included, as would be expected, a strong emphasis on domestic economy and needlework. (149) And as schools improved, as more trained teachers were employed, as more schools adopted the approved curriculum models and the standards set by the Committee of Council, and as more came under the influence of the Inspectorate, the more girls were handicapped and the more their equal achievement became unlikely. Indeed, it is no overstatement to say that their schooling experience

was intended actively to discourage equality of opportunity and achievement between the two sexes. Girls were destined for the private world of the home; their personal happiness, their spiritual and moral welfare, and the well-being of the nation depended on this and it was wrong - and dangerous - for girls to be encouraged by their schooling to divert from the path of their natural and God-given roles.

Though the word has an ironic ring, this was the 'ideal' of girls education. This is what the educational establishment of the Committee of Council, the Inspectors, the representatives of the educational Societies, the school managers and providers defined as an appropriate education for girls, and on their own admission few schools achieved a level that could be defined as good or even satisfactory. In the nineteenth century, as now, theoretical imperatives did not always translate into the realities of schooling in a smooth and uninterrupted process of imposition but were mediated, transformed, perverted and subverted by the immediate economic and social context of the schools, by the attitudes and responses of parents and of teachers, and by the behaviours of the pupils themselves.

In the virtual absence of personal records of



women's lives, there are major obstacles to any investigation of the realities of schooling experience for working-class girls, but it is clear from the evidence that is available that the daily round of school life was often very different from the way it was supposed to be. The information gleaned from reading 'between the lines' of official documents, particularly when these related to what were seen as the weaknesses and failures of the education system, and the picture of school life contained in many log books thus suggests that, even in the 'good' schools of the period, what the teachers did and how the children responded fell far short of the ideals of the educational establishment.

There were, for example, many criticisms of schoolmistresses for failing to teach their female pupils in accordance with the prescribed model; for not conveying the correct moral and social values to their female pupils, and for being deficient in the teaching of domestic skills. Inspector Mitchell, for example, feared that "false pride" on the part of female teachers prevented them from teaching domestic economy, Inspector Cook was told that they often spoke "slightingly" of the needlework, (150) and in her evidence to the Newcastle Commission Miss Hope was strongly critical of their capabilities in, and



attitudes towards the needlework. Schoolmistresses were often "deficient in needlework", she said,

unable to cut out the most common garment, and without an idea how to prepare and arrange work for the classes, or how to teach the children to do the plainest and coarsest work with even common neatness. They have plainly owned that they could not make the children work, and seemed to think that it was unreasonable to expect they should do so. I have asked what they would think of a teacher who said she could not make her scholars spell. It would undoubtedly prove her to be totally unfit for her office, and no less so does the incapacity they think it no shame to avow.  
(151)

Similarly, the pupil-teachers could not always be relied upon to present the desired model of female docility and decorum; chatting to the male pupil teachers (even behaving "indecently" with them in a public place), carrying on clandestine correspondence with men, wearing hoops, and even refusing to do the domestic work of the school. (152) Such attitudes, it was recognised, could divert girls all too easily from the paths of domestic righteousness. Such concerns were expressed in the Newcastle Report:

The apprentices and mistresses exercise a great influence on the public opinion of the school. If they attach the notion of

indignity to the scrubbing-brush, blacklead-brush, washing tub and stew pan, they soon, perhaps in some cases unconsciously, impart it to the girls that are under them or daily with them, and so bring up a race of girls of humble life, who prefer scribbling to scrubbing, or reading Walter Scott, Byron, James, Harrison Ainsworth, translations of Eugene Sue, and the London Journal, to reading their Bible or cookery book. I have seen this effect produced. (my emphasis) (153)

The National Society also expressed concern that the real objectives of girls education were being neglected in the schools. "It is to be hoped", it warned in 1862,

that no desire to make girls little Newtons, little Captain Cooks, little Livingstones, little Mozarts and Handels, and little Sir Joshua Reynoldses, will ever take us too low for keeping in sight the object of teaching them to make and mend shirts, to make and mend pinafores, and darn stockings and socks. If it does then from that day the Society will go back. (154)

And even school Inspectors could "over-estimate the importance of girls to booklearning", according to Mr. Norris. (155)

Even allowing for exaggeration, such criticisms do suggest that, in practice, domestic subjects were not

given the priority that was expected, and that female teachers did not passively accept the role ascribed to them. In this context, the frequent practice of female pupil teachers to go directly into employment at the end of their apprenticeship may have been a blessing in disguise, enabling them to escape the narrow, domestic emphasis of the training courses in the colleges. Further, much of the so-called false pride of the schoolmistresses and apparent unwillingness to place a high value on domestic pursuits would have been understandable amongst those with some degree of training, given that the attainment of such a position would have meant a high degree of personal endeavour and the achievement of an education beyond the normal level. Many of these female teachers must have been valuable role models for their female pupils, particularly in the rural areas, where, despite its many disadvantages, (156) the life of the teacher compared very favourably with that of the average farm labourer's wife. This point is supported by Johnson's findings in Derbyshire, where her examination of standards in village schools concluded that girls reached a higher standard than boys when taught by a female teacher, but the reverse was true if the teacher was a man. (157)

The 1847 reports of Inspectors referred to earlier also showed that girls reached a higher standard in



reading and arithmetic to compound level when taught by a woman; and in the counties inspected by the Rev. J.Allen, girls' standards of achievement were superior to the boys in all the 3Rs when taught in a mixed school by a woman.(158)

Indeed, attendance at a mixed school (and the great majority of rural schools were co-educational) does appear to have been advantageous to girls whether they were taught by a master or a mistress. Where they were taught by a master, their writing was likely to be of a better standard and, not surprisingly, they were more likely to reach a standard of 'proportion and upwards' in arithmetic.(159) Certainly, there was a tendency, noted and criticised by some Inspectors, to discourage the domestic studies of girls in favour of other subjects when they were taught together with boys. (160)

Practical day-to-day considerations could also erode barriers against equal achievements by girls, with the schoolmistresses in Derby, Leeds and Trowbridge who neglected the needlework in favour of the arithmetic probably representing a not uncommon response to the pressures of the Revised Code.(161) And it is difficult to believe in the efficacy of the overt and covert social pressures the schools were supposed to convey and their ability to inculcate the



approved model of feminine behaviour, when one reads log book entries detailing what actually took place in many classrooms. Nothing brings the realities of schooling experience more vividly to life (and the inadvisability of assuming the deed for the word) when one reads of the antics of pupils such as Emma Stevens, Emma Bayton and Eliza Bennet at school in Kingston in the 1860s. The teacher described several incidents of misbehaviour:

Emma Stevens came to school with hoops and took occasion to make them conspicuous, swaying them against my leg. I said Emma, you know the rules about hoops. She swung out of the room calling out that she would not take them off and she would never come again. She came again in them at 2 o'clock ... I said Emma, you have not taken off the hoops, you know the rules as well as I do. She made grimaces and walked out of the playground.

Emma Bayton brought her own work to school and said as she paid two pence per week she was not obliged to help with school work.

Eliza Bennet very disobedient, idle and insolent. She called to other children to sit idle and not to knit.

There was also the incident when the girls refused to curtsy on entering the school "muttering that they should come in as they liked, they did not make

curtsies going into Sunday school and they would not make them here", and trouble with the Imber sisters who kicked and screamed when reprimanded.(162) One might continue with many similar instances from other log books, and probably far more except that teachers must have exercised discretion in always recording the truth of what went on in the classrooms, but the point is made; girls did not inevitably adopt the models of behaviour presented to them simply because this was the way they were expected to behave whilst at school.

There were, also, a number of schools where girls were well taught and were expected to attain good standards in their more academic studies. The schools on the King Edward Foundation at Birmingham, for example, one fifth of whose pupils were the daughters of servants, porters and workmen, evidently encouraged high standards of performance. As Inspector Fitch reported in 1870,

I know no other schools which so refute the popular fallacy as to the incapacity of girls for the advanced study of arithmetic, and the inappropriateness for them of many of the intellectual exercises generally confined to the best boys' schools. The teaching of needlework is not neglected, but fortunately neither the governesses or the parents seem to think that the mental improvement of girls should not be

sacrificed to that art.(163)

There were also the "admirable" schools at Nottingham, St.Leonards, Wolverhampton, and elsewhere which so impressed Mr. Marshall with the standard of the arithmetic.

These schools were of course exceptional, and it would be foolish to conclude that working-class girls in general had access to schools such as these. Nevertheless, the condemnation of ambitious expectations for girls on the part of the National Society must have had some basis in experience, as would Inspector Marshall's strong disapproval of what was said to be happening in girls' schools. As he reported in 1858,

You may meet a girl coming out of school, aye, and her instructress too, who may be able to state the height of every mountain in Europe, and the specific gravity of every mineral, and yet be unable to boil a leg of mutton, or hem a pocket handkerchief; able to pass a first class exam, but not able to perform the duties of a domestic servant or a domestic wife.(164)

But with levels of female literacy, though improving at a steady rate, still well below that of male literacy in 1870, with 27% of the female population still unable to sign their name in 1870 compared with 20% of men, (165) and with the evidence of strong



differentials in the academic achievements of the two sexes contained within the Newcastle survey, Inspector Marshall's comments cannot be seen to have a general or even a wide application.

One might not agree with the gender-based assumptions and ideologies that informed the following observations, but James Booth's evaluation of the practices and achievements of girls' schools against criteria derived from bourgeois domestic ideologies seems a fair summary of the general condition of girls' elementary education from around the 1850s. In his lecture given at the Mechanics' Institute in Wandsworth in 1855, Booth asked. "How are the daughters of the working-classes brought up to fit them for their lot in life ...?",

a girl is sent to a National or British school... she pores listlessly over the pages of a ... Bible ... then she is put to make things like hooks and eyes which she calls figures. She scratches some uncouth zig-zag lines, which she is told is learning to write, and this comprehends what is implied under the taking title, 'a sound moral, religious and scriptural education' ... What can be the use of those scraps of book learning which girls are sometimes taught to get off by heart, fragments of knowledge huddled together which can take no hold on their memories and would be of no value to them if they



did... how is the work carried out in those schools which profess to join work with learning? - why the work is nothing but needlework... Ought not a young woman be taught to stitch and sew? No doubt she ought and taught to do it well, but that is not the only thing she ought to be taught. Why should not young women be taught a knowledge of those common things with which she will have to deal the whole residue of her life? Why should she not, for example, be taught to light a fire, to sweep a room, to wash crockery and glass ..., to wash clothes, to bake bread, to dress a dinner, to choose meat and fish and vegetables and know how to keep them when bought; what clothes are most economical ... why should she not be taught the use of savings banks and the results of thrift? (166)

If the schools were failing to achieve their stated objectives to prepare working-class girls for their domestic futures as servants, wives and mothers, yet, at the same time, were also failing to extend girls' more intellectual achievements, what, if anything, were they managing to do? According to Booth, girls from this class had "no education ... no bringing up", (167) but though they may not have experienced what he defined as 'education', though they might have had little or no formal schooling, they were clearly 'educated' if only by the experience acquired in the context of their daily lives. What then were

the realities of girls' schooling and broader educational experiences?

**Experiences and Attainments: the local dimensions.**

The realities of girls' schooling and broader educational experiences were dependent upon the interaction between three broad determinants; the 'education of circumstance' contained within the every day life of the family and community, the 'education of principle' derived from 'expert' perceptions of the purposes and practices of schooling, and what might be termed the education of application, the immediate dimensions of teaching and learning as they operated within a school.

These elements co-existed in a dialectical relationship to create a multiplicity of realities, with girls experiencing good or poor schooling (however defined), or little or no schooling according to the juxtaposition of contributory variables. Thus, the prime factor determining the educational experience of girls was the organisation of the local labour market. If the immediate and potential circumstances of girls' lives created neither the demand nor the opportunity for schooling, then the nature and quality of school provision was largely irrelevant. Conversely, if the

circumstances of girls' lives were congruent with day school attendance, then the interaction between principles and applications became significant in determining educational realities. It is in the closeness of the match between circumstance and provision, therefore, that the likely realities of girls' schooling and education must firstly be located.

In the industrial regions of Lancashire, though the possibility of a girl receiving a good education, however defined, cannot be denied, the situation was largely one of mis-match, with many girls experiencing only part-time schooling at best. In Norfolk and Suffolk, there is evidence both of match and mismatch between circumstance and schooling, in the contrasting experiences of rural and urban girls. Yet though the immediate conditions of life and work may have been very different for girls across the two regions, the realities of their schooling experiences were informed by the same gender-based principles, and by common problems and practicalities of application, to give a striking similarity to girls' schooling across the two regions. A summary overview of the nature and quality of girls' schooling in urban and rural Suffolk thus serves to provide exemplars of 'good' and 'poor' schools for girls, and enables the threads of various arguments to be drawn



together to present a picture of the likely realities of schooling in this period, as they would have been experienced by girls in Lancashire and Norfolk and Suffolk.

For rural girls, as we have seen, a dearth of readily available work for adult women and young females, and an associated importance of domestic service as the prime occupational destination for country girls, combined to support the attendance of girls at day school. Neither the demand for schooling nor factors of local support, however, were supportive of 'good' schooling, and the reality seems to have been that rural girls had superior access to what, in practice, was often poor quality and/or limited schooling.

Thus, notwithstanding the principles of girls' education, as defined by expert educationists and expressed in the domestically oriented curriculum ideals of the National Society, the application of schooling in the majority Church schools was determined largely by factors of local support.

Few schools could afford to employ trained or qualified schoolteachers, for example, (168) and though, in the ideal, girls were to be taught by carefully selected schoolmistresses, trained to inculcate the skills, knowledge and attitudes of the good servant and wife and mother, the reality was



often very different. The mistress at Westleton National School was judged to be a good teacher by the Inspectors, but the girls in attendance at Kessingland school were taught by a master who seems to have been incapable of maintaining any sort of order in the school and who kept a beer shop in his spare time. (169) The realities of schooling for these girls fell far short of the ideal.

Difficulties of resourcing were cumulative, for few schools could afford to take advantage of government grants and initiatives towards 'improvement'. Of the 304 public day schools in the county at mid-century, only 20 had teachers qualified to train pupil teachers and they had been appointed to only eleven schools attended by girls at this point. (170) As the Diocesan Society complained in relation to the pupil-teacher scheme,

in the generality of schools, especially in the country villages, no direct advantage will be gained because the standard required by the Committee of Council is much too high for the managers of these schools, with the very restricted means at their command, to attain to. (171)

Similarly, though educationists may have arrived at a more creative concept of the socialisation function of elementary schooling, though a more rational approach to education may have informed curriculum

provision in towns such as Leeds, with a concomitant differentiation in 'good' schools between the teaching and learning requirements of the two sexes, such developments hardly impinged on the provided village schools of Suffolk. Financed and controlled largely by the Church of England, with considerable local hostility against 'over' education and parental dislike of 'nonsensical learning', the curriculum of village schools remained limited largely to religion and basic literacy. This is not to deny the possibility of domestic training being provided for the girls by the wife and daughters of local clergymen, but in the co-educational classes of the country schools both girls and boys were taught broadly the same basic and limited curriculum. As Mr. Allington commented in his report on Church schools in Suffolk in the later 1860s, in the majority "the instruction (was) strictly confined to reading, writing, arithmetic and religious knowledge". (171)

Problems of school inadequacy were compounded by erratic attendance, with children taking time off for work, to help at home, because of bad weather and a whole host of other reasons. Teachers were demoralised; "gave a history lesson to the first and second classes. Nine children in all to hear it ... it is enough to dishearten anyone", (172) and childrens' attainments were depressed; "Mrs. Webb

sent word that her child Jane Webb does not progress in her learning. Having shown Mrs. Webb by the register the irregular attendance of her child she ... owns it is no fault of the school".(173) And poor progress - and poor attendance on examination day - could also depress the grant payments made to a school under the Revised Code regulations. At Little Glenham School, for example, only just over half the children were present for the annual inspection in 1869, and only the most strenuous efforts of the schoolmistress and Rector averted a similar situation the following year.(174)

Despite these limitations, however, and notwithstanding Glyde's very poor evaluation of the standards of Suffolk schools at mid-century,(175) or even Mr. Allington's perception of an "utter ignorance of the commonest facts" beyond basic literacy and religion amongst Suffolk school children, (176) it is clear that some country girls were able to enjoy a relatively good education. At Little Glenham school, for example, the children were taught geography and topics such as 'gunpowder' by their teacher Miss Hicks, and though her successor seems to have confined his lessons solely to the Scriptures, a number of girls were able to achieve a reasonable standard of basic education. Jane Barnham was a pupil at the school for nearly nine years and



reached standard five, as also did Lizzie Brightwell, who spent five and a half years at school and became a dressmaker. (177)

Similarly, the four pupils who achieved standard six at Bramford school in 1865 were all girls, as were seven of the eleven children who reached standard five. (178) And at the admittedly exceptional school at Hitcham, where the older pupils were taught Botany by a former Cambridge professor, it was the girls rather than the boys who benefited. (179) A contemporary survey of the parish provided some rare information about the destinations of some of these girls, showing that three at least found education a route for advancement. Two, both the daughters of agricultural labourers, became pupil teachers in the 1860s, with one, Sarah Sipson, going on to attend the Diocesan training college at Norwich and qualifying as a teacher, and the other, Amy Grimwood, becoming a letter-carrier (post woman). The third girl, Mary Ann Baker, also became a teacher, a job that must be considered an improvement on the domestic service that was the lot of her sister Elizabeth, in indicating that Mary Ann was able to exercise some choice with regard to her occupational future. (180)

Such information is rare and it is impossible to estimate the number of girls who would have benefited from schooling in this way, but it is clear that some



country girls could enjoy an extended experience of schooling that was sufficient to lift them above the life of domestic service or farm work, limited prospects, poverty and drudgery that was the lot of most country girls, much as The Pupil Teacher journal had claimed. Similarly, it is feasible to suggest that their schooling enabled some Lancashire girls to escape the 'slavery' that was the lot of the married female weaver.

It is unlikely that the educational experiences of the majority of girls were as positive; some limited schooling was seen to be advantageous to girls, and in the schools of Suffolk, some very limited and basic schooling was probably all they got. That school teachers valued the educational achievements of girls is evident, even to the extent that some showed "a disregard of the value of plain needlework in the education of girls" in decreasing the time allowed to it in favour of "ordinary school work".(181) But though an equality of educational opportunity between boys and girls in the generality of village schools is evident, even a superiority of opportunity for girls in some schools, it was an equality that was derived from the inability of the schools generally to provide a 'good' education, as defined by the gender-specific criteria of the period.

If the schools cited above represented the best that a country school could offer, and it likely that they did, it still compared very favourably to the educational experiences available to girls in the schools of the larger villages and towns, though these were seen to be generally superior. For here, restrictions on girls' attendance at school and limited provision within the schools operated to depress their best achievements to below the level available to boys. Thus in Ipswich, for example, girls left school on average at the age of 11 years and 8 months in 1861, after an average attendance at a school of only 2 years and 10 months, while boys left at 12 years and 3 months after 3 years and 6 months at school. And if public schools only are considered the average length of attendance at a school dropped to just 20 to 21 months for girls, and 23 months for boys.(182)

Curriculum provision was also more limited for girls with, for example, boys at Yoxford school being taught advanced arithmetic and history but not the girls, with boys at Southwold having lessons in composition, advanced arithmetic, geography, grammar, and history but not the girls. (183) And so the list could be continued, with a repetitious account of the many schools where the provision of a 'good' education was synonymous with gender-differentiated

provision that denied girls access to more academic studies in favour of the teaching and learning of needlework, and possibly also domestic skills.

It is more fruitful, however, to explore the likely realities of girls' schooling via an extended examination of the Ipswich British schools, as providing an excellent illustration of the obvious and not so obvious ways in which boys gained educational advantages over girls.

New British schools were opened for boys and girls in Ipswich in 1848, and at the opening ceremony Mr. Smith, a representative from the parent Society in London, spoke at length on the importance of educating girls. If asked the question "which is the most important to educate the male or the female half of the community?" he said, "he should most decidedly say the female half", because of the prime importance of educating women for their role in bringing up and educating their own children. (184)

In spite of these high sounding sentiments, with provision for 150 pupils, the girls' school provided only half the number of school places made available for boys. This may have been due to an expectation of a smaller attendance on the part of girls, and certainly, the girls' school opened with only 59 pupils, and had 38 vacancies still remaining at the end of the year while the school for boys was full.



Differences of provision and enrolment may also have been the chief contributory factors in the decision to pay a lower salary to the schoolmistress (35 pounds per year and a share of the fees compared to the 80 pounds per year and a school house awarded to the master), and the provision of an assistant teacher at the boys' school (salary 50 pounds), but not the girls'. (185) It does not, however, explain the noticeable lack of care given to the selection of the mistress compared to that of the master or the apparent indifference to the poor quality of work in the girls' school.

Both teaching posts were advertised in The Banner and The Nonconformist newspapers, and many applicants were considered for the vacancy at the boys' school, with visits to schools in Bradford and even to Jersey to assess the suitability of candidates. No such trouble was taken for the girls' school, with the mere fact of the appointment of Emma Cade being recorded in the Minutes, and with no reference to any other candidates. The quality of Emma Cade's teaching was clearly unsatisfactory, and though the suggestion that she should be dismissed was made in 1849, a reduction in her basic salary to just over 31 pounds was seen to offer a more satisfactory solution to the problem. Indeed, despite her recognised incompetence, she was given the additional responsibility of a



large class of infants. This was, of course, in line with common practice, not least because regular contact with infants was seen to offer some advantage in helping to prepare girl pupils for the responsibilities of motherhood, but it was one that was frequently criticised by Inspectors as leading to inefficient teaching, because of the many demands thus made on teachers. Nevertheless, this practice continued at the girls' school until 1863.

And while the curriculum of the boys' school offered history, geography, natural history, linear and model drawing, elements of natural science, music and grammar in addition to the basic 3R's, the girls' school taught "as much of this course (the boys' curriculum) as may be deemed suitable, together with a knowledge of plain and useful needlework and knitting". That little of the boys' curriculum would have been deemed suitable is suggested by the poor standards of attainment in the girls' school, with more than half the girls achieving only standard one or two in 1864 and 1865.(186)

Thus we see a school that would probably have claimed to be on a par with the best in the country as far as the boys were concerned; with a broad curriculum, with support from local employers who used the school as a supply source for apprentices and clerks, and with an obvious pride in the school

manifested in lengthy and glowing reports to the British Society in London, contrasting sharply with the sister school where half the pupils were barely able to read, and where the school managers seem to have been largely indifferent in their attitudes towards the more academic attainments of the girls.

Was this school representative of the normal quality of education provided for girls in a public school? One hopes not, but it is impossible to say this with any certainty. It does seem, however, to have been not untypical, while a school for girls on a par with that available for the boys would undoubtedly have been exceptional.

Perhaps more to the point, in the context of the realities of girls' educational experiences, is the likelihood that, had schools on a par with the boys' British school been available to girls, few girls would have attended. Perhaps one such school in a larger village or town may have found an extended clientele amongst the daughters of artisans, shop keepers and the like who aspired to become teachers or superior servants, but, in general terms, and beyond larger industrial towns such as Leeds, there simply was not sufficient demand for quality education for girls to support the establishment and maintenance of a school providing an extended secular education for them. If the curriculum provision of a

girls' school was minimal, what need was there for more?

Despite the poor standards of provision and attainment, the girls in attendance at the Ipswich British school were more fortunate than many others, for the barriers of prejudice, poverty, and ignorance, and the sheer demands of survival debarred many girls in urban Suffolk from formal education, with only limited access to part-time schooling to support the acquisition of literacy skills or wider learning. Glyde described the lot of a working-class women in Ipswich as being "a melancholy one", a description that equally might have been applied to the working-class girls of Lancashire for, factory work apart, there was little to differentiate the realities of experience for urban girls across the two regions. "As soon as she has attained an age sufficient", Glyde described,

she must take care of the younger members of the family, or be sent to roam the streets with shrimps, watercress and vegetables; and thus she is greatly prevented from receiving the daily instruction which is necessary to train and develop her mental powers. (187)

Like Lancashire girls, girls in the towns of Norfolk and Suffolk were often 'too useful to be spared to go to school', and like the children described by Mary



Carpenter in Warrington, many swarmed the streets "utterly untaught and uncultivated".(188) Like the girls of Lancashire, they were unlikely to enter domestic service, and there was little economic incentive to school attendance. For urban girls in both regions, there was a mismatch between the actual and potential circumstances of their lives, and the principles and applications of education, that limited their likely experiences of formal education to a little basic literacy acquired through part-time schooling at best.

Rather than their supposed deficiencies as wives and mothers, Glyde saw the illiteracy of women as the most serious consequence of this deprivation. Of the 604 women married in Ipswich between 1842 and 1847, he calculated, 409 had been unable to sign their own names; a number he estimated, which "must have included nearly every female belonging to the working classes who married during the period". (189) It is statistics such as these, for all their weaknesses, which point up most clearly the educational opportunities available to girls across and within the two regions.

Thus in spite of the many deficiencies and weaknesses in school provision in Norfolk and Suffolk and the problems of rural isolation and poverty that militated against access to schooling, the literacy



figures show a steady improvement, with a decline in overall illiteracy from well above average in 1839-1845 to levels of 27 per cent in 1870, a position much closer to the national average of 24 per cent.(190) These levels, however, disguise important and changing differentials between men and women, with male illiteracy remaining well above the national average throughout the period, but with female illiteracy falling to a level below that of male illiteracy by 1855, and to a level below the national average in Norfolk in the later 1840s and in Suffolk from the 1850s (table 6.1). (191) As Stephens has commented, female illiteracy was remarkably low in several of the counties in the south-eastern sector of England, with striking improvements in female literacy, compared with the prevailing ignorance of agricultural labourers .(192)

Improvement in literacy was also evident in Lancashire, though with continuing high levels of illiteracy throughout the period. Here, however, the pattern of gender differentials was constant, with consistently very high levels of female illiteracy depressing the county average. (table 6.2) In the 1840s, at 39 per cent, male illiteracy was only 6 per cent above the national average (and was much lower than male illiteracy in Norfolk and Suffolk and, at 21 per cent in 1870, was only slightly above the

Gender Variations in Illiteracy 1845-1870

Table 6.1

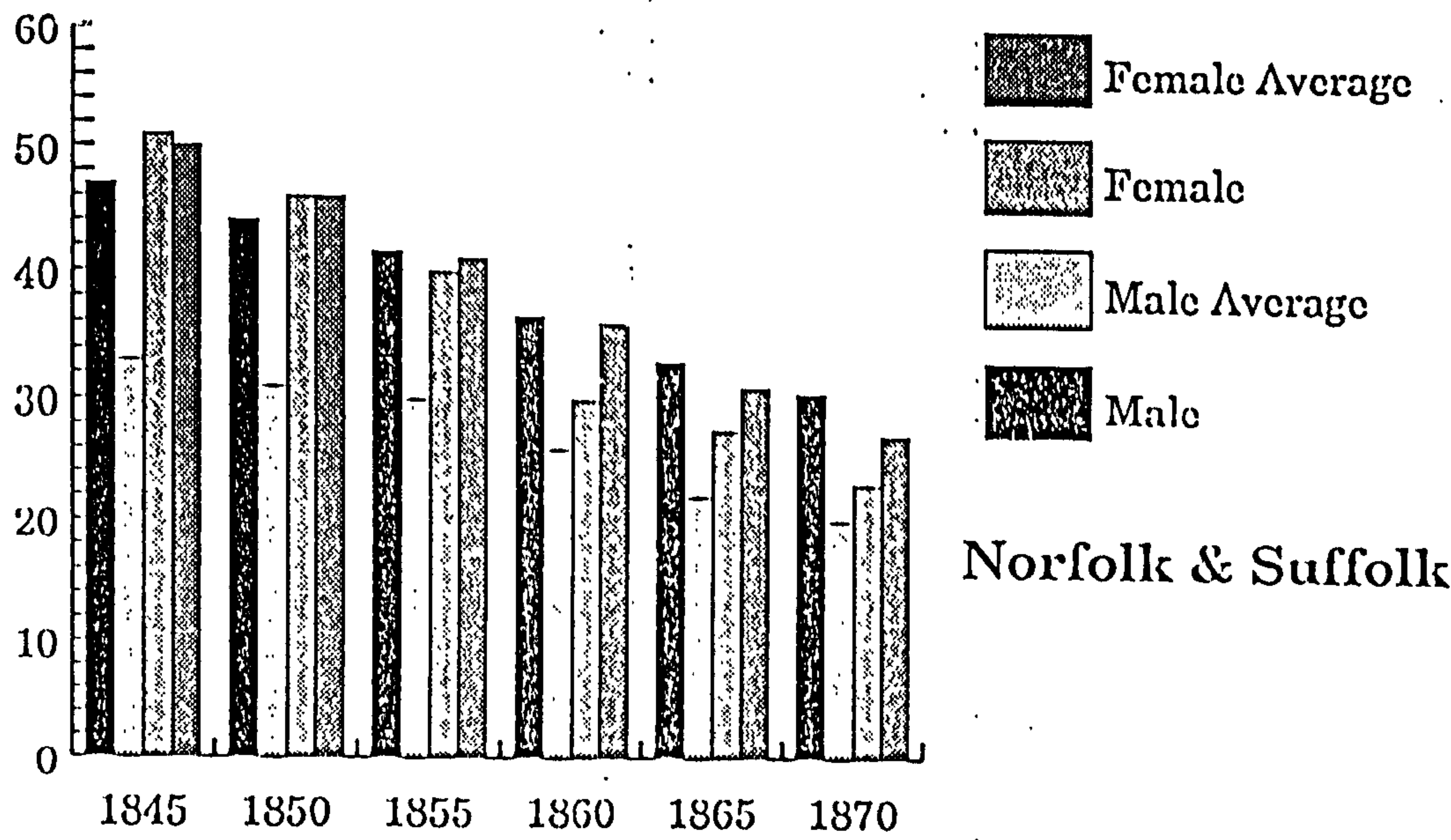
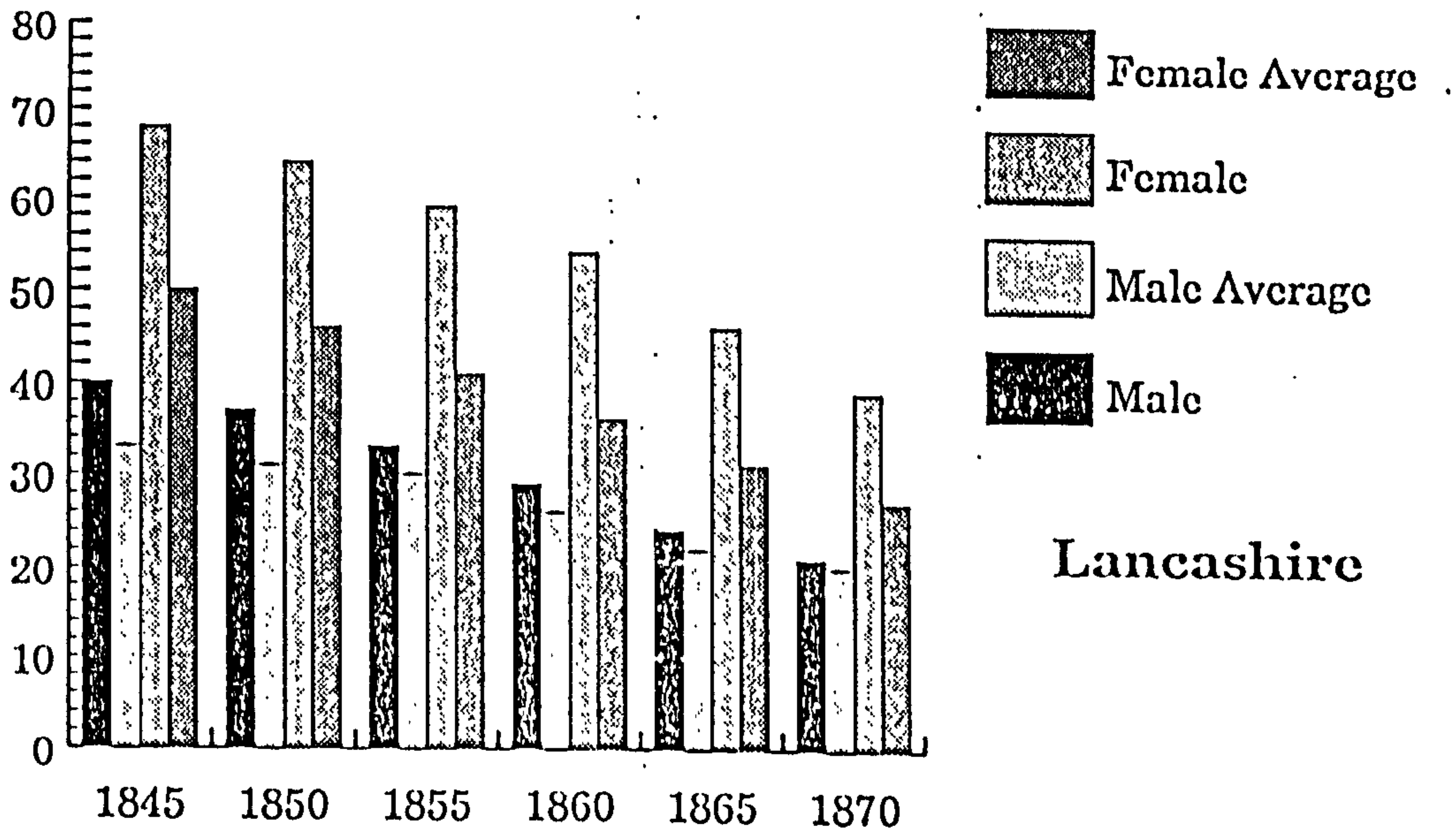


Table 6.2



Calculated from Stephens, W.B. Education, Literacy and Society pp. 322-323.



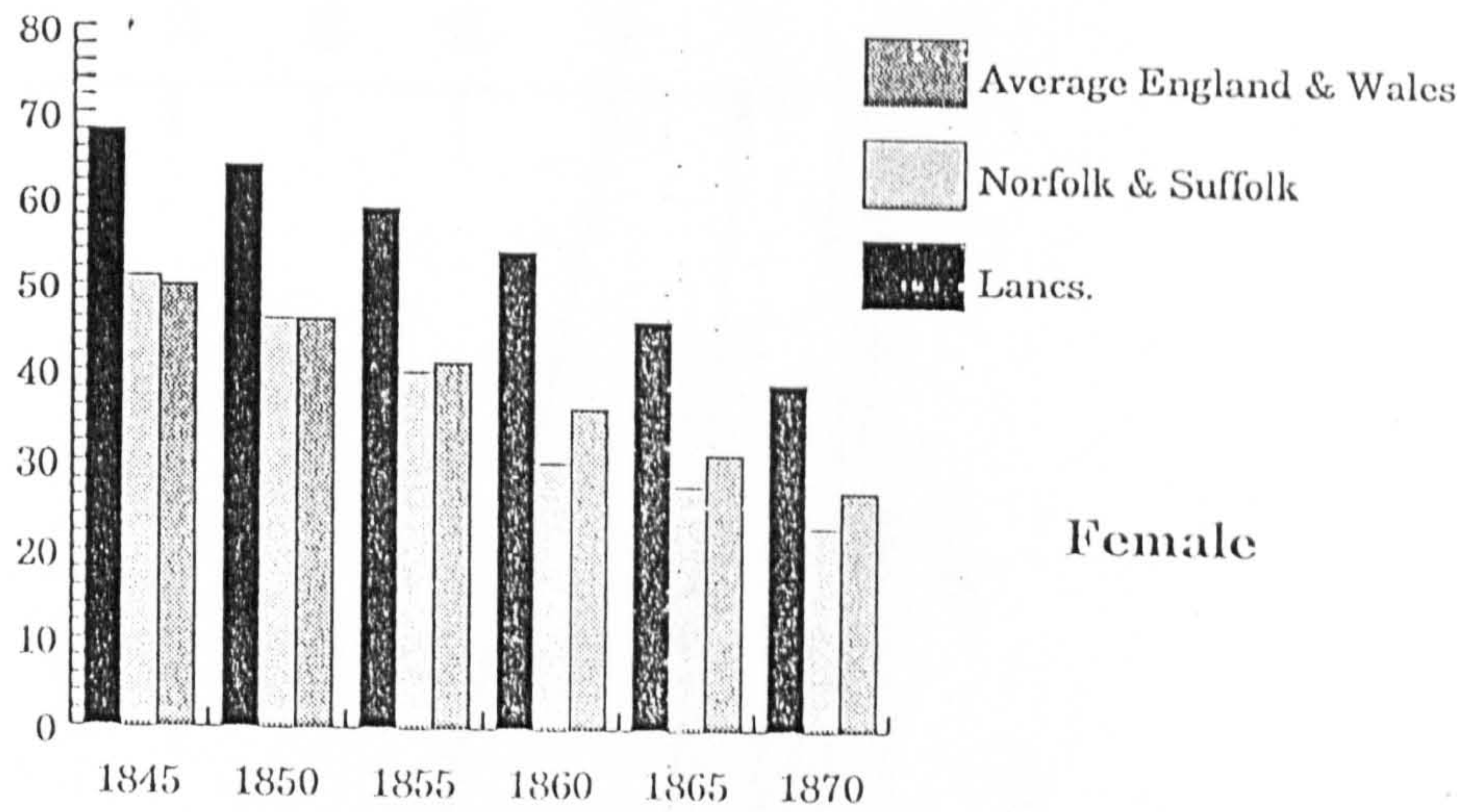
national male average of 20 per cent. (tables 7 and 8)  
 (193) It was the appallingly high levels of illiteracy amongst Lancashire women that depressed county averages, with a level of 67 per cent illiteracy in 1839-45, exceeding every other county in England, and, at 18 per cent still well above the national average of 13 per cent even as late as 1885.  
 (194)

Again, there is a certain irony in the fact that the group identified as taking a theoretical priority in the provision of formal education, in the region identified as being most in need of education and which took the lion's share of National Society resources and Treasury grants in support of education, was the group that, on the evidence of literacy figures, had the worst education of any other in the country before the later 1850s, vying thereafter with Monmouth for this most dubious of palms. (195)

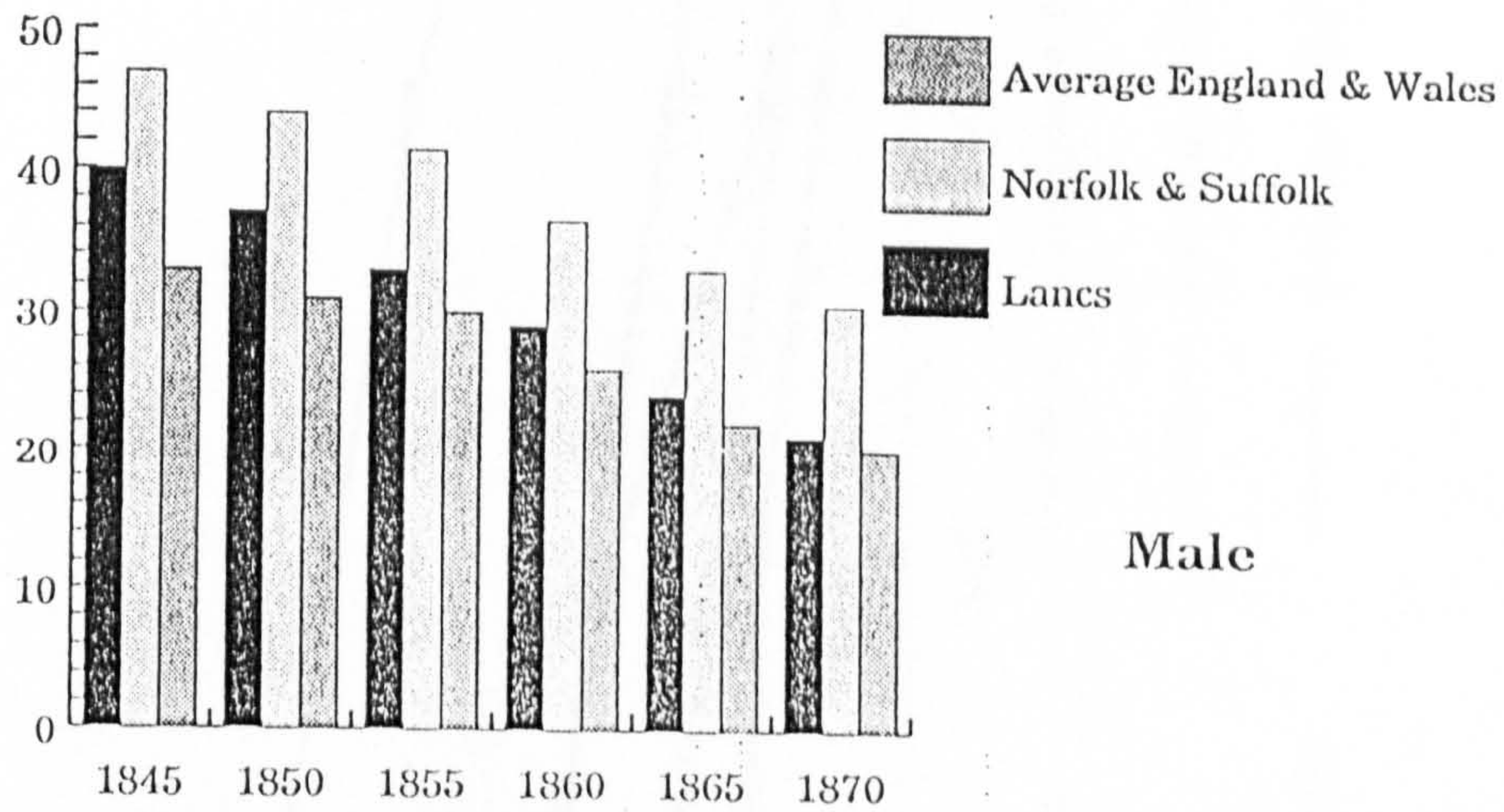
Differences between and within regions, however, support the argument that occupational opportunities and prospects were the prime determinants of female education, with factors of provision becoming significant only when occupational factors generated demand for, and enabled access to schooling. For the female superiority found in Norfolk and Suffolk was not maintained in the urban districts, while the

Regional Variations in Illiteracy 1845-1870

Table 7



Female

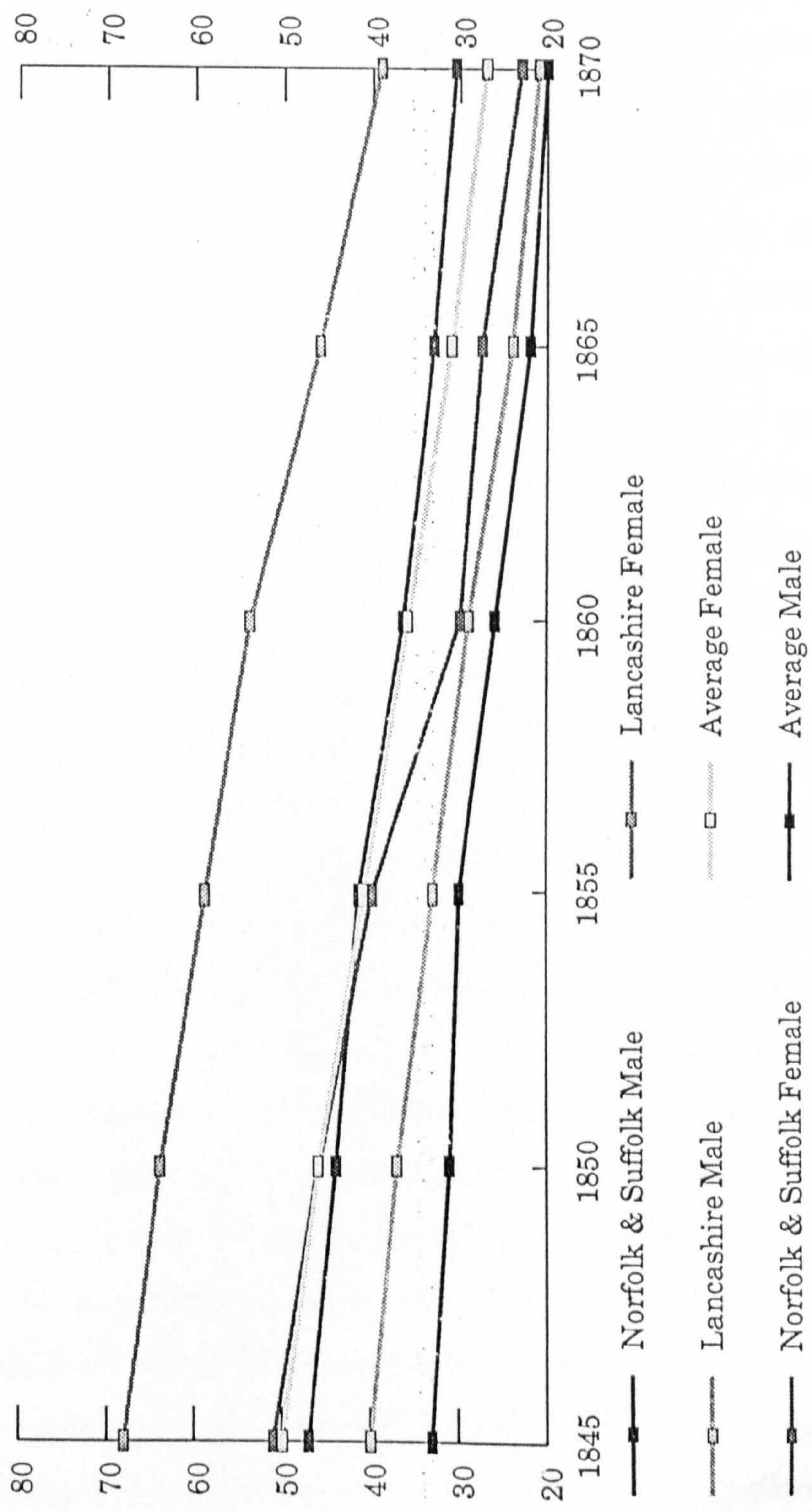


Male

Calculated from Stephens, W.B., ibid.



Regional & Gender Variations in Illiteracy 1845-1870



Calculated from Stephens, W. B., ibid

sharp differences between male and female literacy were softened considerably in the more rural, less industrialised areas of Lancashire. Thus, in the East only in Norwich and Ipswich was female illiteracy greater than male illiteracy by 1870, (196) while in the non-industrial Lancashire districts of Fylde, Ormskirk, Lancaster, Ulverstone and Lunesdale differences between male and female literacy were 5 per cent or less. (197) The work of women in the textile factories of the North may have enabled them to gain a degree of economic independence that was unattainable to women elsewhere, but such independence carried heavy costs, not least those which denied them education to place them amongst the most illiterate people in the country.

It is important to remember, however, that the extension of literacy was incidental to the main purpose of education for women, though it had its place as an enabling skill in the improvement of female morality and domestic efficiency that was to transform the working classes. We have seen in the previous chapters that, despite an increase in their factory employment after the 1830s, Lancashire women did become more home-centred after mid century and the possibility remains that the extension of elementary education may have been more successful in the inculcation of such values than in the

development of female literacy. That discussion belongs in the conclusions to this study, where the many complex threads of the various arguments here developed are pulled together in a summary of the developments that characterised female work and education and their causes and consequences over the period 1800 to 1870.



## Notes

1. Kay-Shuttleworth, J., Four Periods of Public Education as Reviewed in 1832, 1839, 1846, and 1862, London, 1862, pp.63-4.
2. P.P. 1835, VII, p.185.
3. English Journal of Education, vol.1, 1843, p.214, quoted by Goldstrom, 'The Working-Class Child' in Mc.Cann (ed.) *op.cit*, p.100.
- 4 Annual Report of the Diocesan Society for the Archdeaconry of Suffolk, 1841.
5. Jones, op.cit., p.112.
6. Goldstrom, ibid, p.102.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid, p.103.
9. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.1.,p.127.
10. Ibid p.224.
11. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.2.,pp.195-6.
12. Goldstrom, ibid.
13. Though instrumental use implies pragmatic consensus, the values of self-help, independence, and self-improvement were the product of an indigenous working-class culture which, whilst increasingly in harmony with bourgeois cultural ethics, retained its own versions of political and economic 'truths'. See the discussion in chapter 6.
14. Goldstrom, ibid.
15. See, for example, his comments to the Select Committee of 1837-8 quoted in chapter 7.
16. Annual Report of the National Society, 1841, pp.151, 156.
17. Annual Report of the National Society 1847, p.30.
18. P.P. 1847 XLV, p.303.
19. Annual Report of the British Society, 1841, p.7.



20. Kay-Shuttleworth's instructions to Inspectors obliged them to enquire whether the girls were receiving instruction in household management. P.P. 1840 XL, p.13.  
Inspector Cook, for example, "always strenuously advocated the introduction of all kinds of domestic employment ... with the ordinary work of the schools". P.P. 1857-8 XLV, p.253.
21. 43 per cent of girls in public schools and 30.4 per cent in private schools were said to be taught 'industrial occupations', P.P. 1852-3 XC, p.cxxxiii, table 3.
22. The Committee of Council established an Inspectorate for workhouse schools in 1846. The grant of state money for the whole salary of the teacher was dependent on the Inspector's assessment of their capabilities and on his approval of the educational facilities provided. His recommendations as to the books and equipment to be used in the school had to be adhered to. Digby, op.cit., pp. 182, 184, 188.
23. Ibid, p.182.
24. Fourth Report of the Poor Law Commission, P.P. 1837-8 XXVIII, p.290.
25. Quoted by Hurt, J., 'Drill, Discipline and the Elementary School Ethos' in McCann, P., (ed.), op.cit., p.169.
26. This was laid down by the General Consolidated Order cited by Mr. Bowyer in his report for 1849. P.P. 1848 XLII, p.73.
27. This was, according to Mr. Bowyer, a common opinion, often based on the view that the principle of 'less eligibility' should also extend to education. ibid.
28. P.P. 1849 XLII, p.34.
29. P.P. 1850 XLIII, pp.5-6.
30. Kay-Shuttleworth, for example, recruited several Scottish teachers, trained by Stow in Glasgow and Wood in Edinburgh, to visit workhouse schools in East Anglia to act as models for inexperienced teachers and to improve upon teaching methods. Digby, op.cit., pp.186-7.  
The pupil-teacher system had its origins in a Norfolk workhouse school, when one of the pupils,

William Rush, took over the teaching when the regular teacher fell ill. Kay-Shuttleworth's interest in the success of this venture was developed by visits to Holland and, following further experiments in the workhouse schools at Norwood and in East Anglia, the pupil teacher system of teacher training was established by the Minutes of 1846. Lawson and Silver, op.cit., p.283.

31. P.P. 1850 XLIII, p.5. He had complained in his report for 1849 about the "extreme difficulty" in giving girls "sufficient literary instruction" because of the inadequacies of teachers. P.P. 1849 XLII, p.12.
32. By January 1838 there were nearly 1,000 children in Norfolk workhouses, for example, and between 1,000 to 1,500 in the 1850s and 1860s. The number of children in workhouse schools varied, with, for example, an average of 22 in the school in the Flegg union, 113 in the Mitford and Launditch union school and 167 in the Norwich union school. These last two were exceptional, being the only two schools with more than 100 pupils, and with over half the schools having less than 50 pupils on average. The small size of the schools meant that few had resources - or incentive - to employ specialist teachers for industrial training, and with the quality and range of instruction being dependent on the abilities of the workhouse teacher. Though the establishment of district schools was permitted under the legislation of 1844 and 1849, Norfolk Guardians were reluctant to co-operate in the establishment of schools that would be away from their immediate control, and were not even prepared to set up schools detached from the workhouse and serving one or two unions, as was done in some unions in Suffolk.  
In Norfolk, for example, union schools averaged a change of teacher every 18 months in the later 1830s and 1840s. Digby, op.cit., pp.183,187,189-90.ibid, p.187.
33. Inspection of 41 workhouse schools in the North revealed very similar problems, with 25 of the teachers drawn from the ranks of the adult paupers and most of them "grossly incompetent, cannot write, or spell, or ask a question in the proper manner". Ibid; P.P. 1849 XLII p.160.
34. Hurt, 'Drill', p.169.



35. Silver found, for example, that his study of a workhouse school revealed "a very different picture from the standard stereotype" of workhouse schools, with a Glasgow trained teacher who had made it a condition of his appointment that the Guardians should purchase reading books, maps, slates, pictures and equipment for physical training. Silver, H., 'Neglect', p.20.
36. P.P. 1849 XLII, pp.35-6.
37. Ibid, p.238.
38. 90 of 143 workhouse schools had no industrial training for boys in the later 1840s. P.P. 1849 XLII, p.81.
39. At Kirkdale workhouse school in Liverpool and the Central London District School, for example, boys were trained to be sailors, and in one school in the North visited by Mr. Brown boys were working as joiners, glaziers, and as hairdressers, were learning to operate steam machinery, and were employed on agricultural work and gardening. P.P. 1850 XLIII, p.121; Hurt, 'Drill', p.169.
40. P.P. 1849 XLII, p.83.
41. So-called 'industrial training' might include, as it did at Keighley, Preston and Rochdale in 1850, working in a local factory, or stone breaking and oakum picking. P.P. 1849 XLII, pp.111-5; P.P. 1850 XLIII, p.115.
42. P.P. 1849 XLII, p.115.
43. P.P. 1852-3, LXXIX, p.129.
44. She made an exception in the case of the Norwich homes established in 1847 for boys and 1850 for girls as a bridge between the workhouse and the outside world. Selected boys were educated in the home and then lodged there for two years whilst working in the city. Girls "completed their education by a systematic training as domestic servants within the home". Digby, op.cit., pp.191-2.  
A further exception, evaluated against rather different criteria, may have been the "excellent" school in the Guiltcross union in Norfolk, where the children were taught for four hours per day without any interruption for work on household tasks, where there was a plentiful supply of

books and other resources, and where the curriculum included subjects such as history, geography and grammar. ibid, p.185.

45. P.P. 1850 XLIII, p.48.
46. 4,120 girls, 4,057 boys.Ibid.
47. Ibid, pp.4-7. Mr. Brown also commented on girls' poor achievements in arithmetic but thought this probably arose from natural differences in abilities between the two sexes. He commented, the inferiority of girls to boys is remarkable, and may, probably, be ascribed to less natural aptitude for calculations.Ibid, p.110.  
See also Mr. Symons' report, P.P.1849 XLII, p.242. In his report to the Newcastle Commission, the Rev. James Fraser also questioned the value of the industrial training in domestic skills given to girls in workhouse schools, on the grounds that the scale of their work might engender habits of extravagance and wastefulness. Newcastle, 1861 XXI.2., p.62.
48. See, for example, P.P. 1849 XLII, pp.65, 159; P.P.1850 XLIII, p.111. Children were also sometimes kept away from school as a punishment and, presumably, to do household chores. Children in two Norfolk unions began to attend local schools in the 1850s (despite the hostility of the Poor Law Board to this practice) and, as numbers of children in the workhouses declined, this practice spread. After 1870, the difficulties of providing an adequate education within the workhouse led the Poor Law Board to support the sending of children to local schools and by the turn of the century this had become almost universal practice. Digby, op.cit., p.195.
49. Mary Carpenter, in Chadwick, E., Letter to N.W.Senior, quoted by Silver, H.,op.cit., p.40. As Secretary to the Poor Law Commissioners, Edwin Chadwick had a major involvement in the operation of the Poor Law of 1834, including the operation of workhouse education. He was also "the crucial figure" in promoting enthusiasm for half-time education for factory children. Ibid, p.46
50. P.P. 1839 XLII, p.21.
51. Hurt's otherwise excellent article provides a further instance of ambiguity in the use of the word 'children'. Though Hurt appears to suggest



that only boys were involved in drill, this is not made clear. Hurt, 'Drill', pp.166-189.

52. Silver, op.cit., pp.48, 53.
53. Ibid, p.41.
54. See Horner's comments on curriculum provision for factory girls quoted in chapter 7. P.P.1834 XLIII, p.13.
55. Fry, A., 'Reports on the Inspectors of Factories on the Effects of the Educational Provisions of the Factories Act', Journal of the Statistical Society of London, vol.2, 1839, p.174.
56. As Inspector Howell commented with reference to the extension of legislation to the print works, that the educational benefits conferred by the Factory Acts were "rather illusory than substantial". P.P. 1847-8 XXVI.1.,p.17.
57. There was much debate as to the value of half-time education. Silver, op.cit., pp.35-59.
58. Log book entries for St. Saviour's Girls and Infant school. Leeds for 27/1/1863, 12/3/1863, 28/4/1863, 12/5/1863, 11/9/1863, 30/10/1863, 2/2/1864, 21/3/1866. At Fence in Pendle school, half-timers were absent for a period of nine weeks when the factory was closed. Log book, Fence in Pendle school, entry for May 1869.
59. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.2.,p.231.
60. Inspector Pickard said the tiredness of factory children was one of the main "hindrances to the progress of education". P.P. 1868-9 XX, p.159.
61. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.2., p.228.
62. P.P. 1870 XXII, appendix D, p.104.
63. Newcastle, P.P. XXI.2., p.230.
64. Ibid, p.231.
65. See chapter 7. Newcastle, ibid.
66. Laqueur, op.cit., p.122.
67. Ibid, p.120.

68. Report of the Manchester and Salford Ragged School Union, 1859, p.18.

69. Frith in McCann (ed.), op.cit., p.73.

70. This was also true in the female classes of the Mechanics' Institutes and the Working Men's Colleges. Purvis, 'Hard Lessons', p.199.

71. Reports of the Jubilee School for Girls, Manchester, 1856-1870, pp.22, 14.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid, p.17-18.

74. Ibid, p.16-17.

75. Ibid, p.5.

76. P.P. 1850 XLIII.1., pp.8-9.

77. The timetable was as follows:

Boys	Girls
8.00-12.00 lessons	8.00-10.15 lessons
12.30-2.00 "	10.15-12.00 kitchen work
2.00-5.00 gardening	12.30-2.00 needlework
	2.00-5.00 lessons

ibid.

78. P.P. 1856 XLVII, p.385.

79. Ibid

80. Log book, Ewell School for Girls, entry for 1/8/1866.

81. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI..3.,p.63.

82. P.P. 1856 XLVII, p.386.

83. For developments in this later period see Dyhouse, op.cit, pp. 82-4, 89-91.

84. Newcastle, P.P. XXI.1., p.663.

85. The goals of class-cultural transformation were very evident in the exam. questions on domestic economy presented to female teachers in training. Those for 1852, for example, included such gems as:  
What effect has the employment of women in

charing, washing or outdoor labour upon their families?

What effect has the employment of girls in straw plaiting and lace making upon their moral habits and the comfort of their homes?

P.P.1852-3 LXXIX, p.469.

86. P.P. 1847-8 L, p.8; P.P. 1856 XLVII, p.358; P.P. 1852-3 LXXX, p.21; P.P. 1854-5 XLII, p.482.
87. 75.8 per cent of public school pupils, 73.8 per cent of private school pupils. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.1., p.662 (public), p.666 (private).
88. Note 111 below.
89. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.2., p.213.
90. P.P. 1847 XLV, p.17.
91. P.P. 1856 XLVII, p.365.
92. Ibid, p.479.
93. Ibid, p.229.
94. Ibid, p.384.
95. Ibid, p.385. See also the evidence of Lady Dukinfield to the Newcastle Commission, P.P. XXI.5., p.143.
96. P.P. 1857 XXXIII, p.481.
97. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.3., p.135.
98. Though the girls of Newcastle on Tyne Ragged School, for example, earned £26 for their school in 1866, even most Ragged Schools discontinued the practice as not being financially worth while, though the girls continued to make and mend the boys' clothes. Webster, D.H., 'The Ragged School Movement and the Education of the Poor in the Nineteenth Century', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 1973, p.246. Patchwork quilt making became a common occupation in many schools, presumably because it gave plenty of practice in plain sewing at little expense to the school.
99. Extensive reading has produced this as the sole example of a parent objecting to needlework. Mrs. Townsend's annoyance also stemmed from the fact



of her daughter being sent home for cotton - and to remove her 'hoops'. Log book, Norbiton St. Peter's National Girls' School, entry for 8/6/1864.

100. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.5., p.232.
101. Ibid, pp.103-4.
102. P.P. 1847 XLV, p.303.
103. P.P. 1851 XLIV.2., p.142.
104. Second Annual Report of the Salford Ragged and Industrial Schools, 1836-7, p.10. See also Madoc-Jones in McCann (ed.), op.cit., pp.49-50.
105. School managers had to be satisfied as to the moral character of candidates for apprenticeships and that of their families. Minutes of 21/12/1846 in Hurt, J. 'Education in Evolution', p.121.  
 Enquiries into the moral fitness of female candidates should be particularly searching advised Inspector Cook;  
 With regard to the girls, the enquiries have been even stricter and more searching. Not only should the character of the parent be unobjectionable, but their homes should be decent and respectable.  
 P.P. 1847-8 L, p.31-2.  
 Girls were preferably to be taught by, or in the presence of, a school mistress. Young and/or unmarried male teachers were not seen to be suitable mentors for female pupil teachers, and a chaperone (the master's wife or a blood relation) was required in all cases where female pupil teachers were taught by male teachers. School managers were warned that should they employ a female pupil teacher as apprentice to a master, "they must hold themselves wholly and solely responsible ... for the moral consequences".  
 Both male and female pupil teachers had to submit 3 certificates every year, testifying to their character, attentiveness to their religious duties, their punctuality, obedience, diligence and attention to their school duties.  
 Hurt, ibid, pp.121-2.
106. Only 38 of 340 female teachers of private schools in Finsbury in the early 1840s were said to be teachers from choice. Those in Birmingham



were said to find their work "tiresome and unpleasant", but were forced to it by "harsh necessity". Journal of the Royal Statistical Society of London, vol.3, 1840 (Birmingham), vol.6, 1843, p.34 (Finsbury).

107. P.P. 1854-5 XLIII, p.574.

108. For details of the duties and responsibilities of female pupil teachers see Newcastle, 1861 XXI.f., pp. 134-6.

Female pupil teachers (and the mistresses who taught them) were frequently paid less than their male counterparts, with, in 1869, one in six of female pupil teachers having starting salaries of under 5 pounds per year, compared to one in ten of male pupil teachers. Horn, P. Education in Rural England, New York, 1978, p.75.

G.W.Proctor calculated a working week of around 48 hours for female pupil teachers, not including time given to private study at home. School managers "who have the interests of their female apprentices really at heart and the interests of the children", he said, "would require the female apprentices ... to do sometimes all the household work of the school premises", in addition to their other duties. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.3., p.134.

The 1860 intake consisted of 1,571 girls, 1,521 boys. Hurt, op.cit., p.124.

Inspector's reports, however, point to the fact that whilst representing an opportunity of some real value to girls, becoming a pupil teacher was a poor option for boys. Inspector Stewart, summed up the position. "Your Lordships' stipends are so far below the market value of a boy's services", he said, "that, in many schools, ... no candidate for the office can be found". ibid, p.125.

109. Newcastle, P.P. XXI.3., pp.136-7, 350.

110. The Pupil Teacher, II, 1859, pp.81-2, quoted by Hurt, ibid, p.125.

111. Hurt, ibid, p.124-5. A certificated school mistress earned much less, on average, than a master though it is difficult to be specific about salaries, particularly after 1862. Nevertheless, the job brought with it a good salary in comparison with other employments open to women, and often also rent free accommodation.

112. See, for example, Newcastle, P.P.XXI.2., p.434.
113. Newcastle, P.P.XXI.3., pp.240, 265.
114. Arnold, M., Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882, London, 1908, pp. 25-26.
115. P.P. 1857 XXXIII, p.468.
116. Unfortunately, the girls stayed away on plain needlework afternoons if they wanted to do their fancy work. Log book, St. Andrew's School, Derby, entries for 23/5/1865, 18/1/1866.
117. Committee Book, Mount Pleasant School, Liverpool, entry for May 1859.  
The majority of High Schools for Girls, including those of the Girls' Public Day School Company, provided lessons only in the mornings so that girls might spend their afternoons at home with their mothers. Dyhouse, op.cit., p.71. Schools might also adjust their hours of opening to suit parents. Clifton Infant School in Bristol, for example, was open on Saturday mornings for a period to take care of children whilst their mothers were at work. Minutes of Clifton Infant School Ladies Committee, June 1827.
118. Newcastle, P.P.XXI.3., p.137.
119. Anna Davin has shown how the School Boards often exercised a double standard regarding absence from school, with the 'truancy' of boys being regarded as an offence but the absences of girls being accepted as a fact of life. Cited in Dyhouse, ibid, p.102.
120. This might be done by the teacher on an informal basis. The lady visitors to the Hibernian girls' school in Liverpool, for example, reported 31 girls in attendance when they visited in August 1842, plus 10 little children "accompanying their sisters who are not admitted or entered on the books". Report of the Ladies Committee, August 1842.  
Inspector Stewart reported "cases where parents have refused to allow girls of tolerable age to attend school except each girl was permitted to bring a baby". P.P. 1856 XLVII, p.413.
121. Frith in McCann (ed), op.cit., p.79.



122. P.P. 1854-5 XLII, pp.393-4, reproduced in Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.1.,pp. 237-8.
123. See, for example, his comments on girls' education and the training of female teachers in P.P. 1857-8 XLV, pp.249, 253.
124. P.P. 1867-8 VII, p.198.
125. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.2., p.196.
126. Public Schools

	male	female
physical science	4.5	1.3
algebra	1.5	-
Euclid	1.4	-
geography	42.4	35.4
grammar	29.8	25.8
history	22.6	15.6
arithmetic	71.1	66.9
writing	79.2	76.8

The only subject areas where the proportion of girls was greater than the proportion of boys were religion (92.9 per cent boys, 94 per cent girls), industrial work (2.4 per cent boys, 5.6 per cent girls), and, of course, needlework (75.8 per cent girls, no boys).

Newcastle, P.P.1861 XXI.1., p.663.As Hurt warns, and as the Newcastle Commissioners were aware, Managers' descriptions of curriculum provision, (upon which these tables were based), are no indication of the quality of provision. Hurt, 'Elementary Schooling', p.29.

127. Though the British schools in particular offered a wider curriculum, it is likely that only those from the higher ranks of the working classes had access to this. See chapter 7. Limited attendance (and perceptions of what constituted really useful knowledge) also limited access to a wider curriculum, with only an estimated 24.58 per cent of children reaching the first class where the more advanced lessons were taught. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.1.,p.245.
128. Boys at Ipswich British school, for example, studied the 3Rs, English, grammar, history, geography with the use of globes, natural history, linear and model drawing, and elements of mathematical science. Managers' Minutes of the Ipswich British School, May 1849. The curriculum at the girls' model school at

Borough Road was more extensive than that normally available in girls' schools but was noticeably less academic than the boys' curriculum cited above. It included geography, practical arithmetic, object lessons, English history, grammar, scripture, reading, spelling, and dictation as well as domestic economy and needlework. The Normal Schools of the British and Foreign School Society (Female Department), The British Society, 1854, p.17.

129. Annual Report of the National Society, 1840, pp. 127-8.
130. P.P. 1843 XL, pp.138-9.
131. P.P. 1841 XX, p.181, notes 9,13.
132. See, for example, the maths. requirements for female pupil teachers in P.P. 1867-8 LIII, pp. 101-2.
133. The Newcastle Commission described the courses at the female colleges thus: "the syllabus for the female colleges resembles the syllabus for the male colleges but its subjects are fewer and easier". P.P. 1861 XXI.1.,p.123.
134. P.P. 1850 XLIII, p.7.
135. P.P. 1856 XLVII, p.521.
136. P.P. 1870 LIV, p.514.
137. Log book, Almondsbury School for Girls, Wakefield. Entry for 23/8/1863.
138. P.P. 1857-8 XLV pp.589-90.
139. P.P. 1846 XXXII, pp.390, 394.
140. P.P. 1847-8 L, p.288.
141. P.P. 1856 XLVII, p.521.
142. Author's calculations based on statistical evidence contained in the reports of Inspectors Allen, Cook and Moseley, P.P. 1847 XLV, pp.40-67, 136-150, 112-133.
143. P.P. 1857 XXXIII, p.240.



144. This does not necessarily mean that no girls at all were learning such subjects, but the numbers would have been infinitesimal at best.
145. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.1., pp.666-7.
146. P.P. 1867-8 XLV, pp.589-90.
147. P.P. 1870 XXII, p.28.
148. Mr. Johnson's general observations of the work of mixed schools and "minute analysis of a few separate cases" led him to the belief that there was no substantial difference between the elementary work of the two sexes. He commented,  
As might be expected from their greater care and neatness, the girls both read and write in a slighter degree better than the boys, and as also might be expected from the want of reasoning power, they do their arithmetic worse, though by no means so much worse as the ordinary contrast between boys' and girls' schools leads us to expect ... the thought then naturally occurs that if girls who ordinarily devote the half of their day in needlework can produce results which are equal to the boys, they must more than equal them in natural ability, since they produce the same work in half the time ... It has surprised me to find that teachers ascribe the equality not to greater quickness on the part of the girls, but to the comparative uselessness of the afternoon's work to the boys: These, while the girls are all at their needlework, are occupied with extra lessons, that are but amplification of the morning ones and present no novelty or interest.  
P.P. 1870 XXII, p.143. Comment is superfluous.
149. Note 133 above. The syllabus for domestic economy included instruction in "clothing, food, cooking, laundry, the duties of servants, household expenses of a labouring man and his family, savings banks, the nature of interest, and practical rules, personal and domestic, for the preservation of health". Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.1., p.124.
150. P.P. 1854 LI, p.482; P.P. 1857 XXXIII, p.232.
151. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.5., pp.231-2.
152. See, for example, the Committee Book of Mount Pleasant School, Liverpool, January, 1861;

Minutes of St. Paul's Bentinck School, London, 5/10/1863; Minutes of St. Martin's National School, London, 6/10/1858; Log book, Holy Trinity School, Ipswich, January 1867.

153. Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.3., p.86.
154. National Society Monthly Papers 1862, in Johnson, H.M., 'The Education of Girls in Derby and Derbyshire 1800-1930', Unpublished M.Ed., dissertation, University of Nottingham, 1966, p.77.
155. P.P. 1856 XLVII, p.385.
156. See, for example, Horn, P., 'Education in Rural England', chapters 6 and 7, pp.151-177.
157. Johnson, H.M., op.cit., p.95.
158. P.P. 1847 XLV, pp.56-64.
159. Ibid. Mr. Allington made a similar point in respect of the Church schools in Suffolk.  
         the difference (in girls' attainments)  
         is not so noticeable in mixed schools.  
         In them the proportion of boys to girls  
         in the higher classes and the  
         superiority of one over the other in  
         attainments appears to depend mainly on  
         the sex of the teacher.  
         P.P. 1870 XXII, p.28.
160. See, for example, Mr. Norris's report of 1856,  
         where he commented,  
         It has often occurred to me that one  
         serious objection to mixed schools is  
         the great probability of needlework  
         being slighted. The girls thus brought  
         into competition with the boys regret  
         the time spent away from their books.  
         P.P. 1856 XLVII, p.384.  
         See also Mr. Scoltock's report on British schools  
         in the North where a similar point is made. P.P.  
         1857-8 XLV, p.576.
161. Log book entries for St. Peter's School for  
         Girls, Derby, March and December 1864; St.  
         James's Girls' National School, Trowbridge,  
         September 1864; Leeds Parish Church School for  
         Girls, May 1865. (The Trowbridge reference was  
         given by one of my students)  
         There were many popular stories about  
         Inspectors' ignorance regarding needlework and



their embarrassment when called upon to inspect feminine 'intimate garments'. Dyhouse, op.cit., p.86.

The temptation for teachers to cheat inspection by doing some of the work themselves must have been great.

162. Log book entries for Kingston Girls' School, entries for October 1865, January and October 1866, March 1870.
163. P.P. 1870 XLVII, p.65.
164. P.P. 1856 XLVII, p.521.
165. Stephens, 'Education', op.cit., p.323.
166. Booth, James, On the Female Education of the Industrial Classes, London, 1855, pp.12-14.
167. ibid, p.16.
168. Glyde calculated that the average pay of teachers (male and female) in the 60 'best schools' in Suffolk was 58 pounds. In the 71 'best schools' in Surrey, average annual salaries were 96 pounds. Glyde, 'Suffolk', p.238. The Church School Enquiry of 1847 found 88 teachers in Suffolk schools receiving salaries of less than 30 pounds, with average salaries of teachers in Church schools of only 33 pounds. As Glyde commented, "this deficiency of proper stipends causes a number of very inefficient teachers to be connected with our elementary schools. Church School Enquiry 1847; Glyde, ibid, p.228.
169. Log book entries, Westleton School, 1863-1870. Report of the District Committee for Education of the Deanery of Lothingland, 1842;
170. Glyde, ibid, p.225.
171. P.P. 1867-8 XXV, p.23
172. See, for example, entries for January 1864 in Westleton school log book. As Inspector Hedley commented,  
In agricultural parishes the attendance of the children is so much interrupted that a great part of the time during which they are in school is spent in recovering the power of reading etc. which they possessed

the year before.  
Newcastle, P.P. 1861 XXI.2.,p.144.

173. Log book entries for Westleton school, April 1864, Bramford school, January 1865.
174. Children were working in the fields, gathering acorns etc., and on three occasions between October 6th. to the 13th. the school had to be closed because of poor attendance. Only 40 children were present for the Inspector's visit, but this enabled the school to earn a grant of £35.5s.4d.. Log book entries, Little Glenham School, October 1869.
175. In the 26 boys' schools, 23 girls' schools and 54 mixed schools in association with the Church at mid century, only one in three children were able to read sufficiently well to be able to read the Bible, while nearly half were just beginning to read. The same proportion were just beginning to learn to write and only one in four was able to write a composition. Only one quarter had advanced to compound rules in arithmetic and "many of the 4,000 who profess to elementary arithmetic cannot do a sum in simple addition without help". Glyde, 'Suffolk', p.222.
176. P.P. 1867-8, XXV, p.23.
177. Calculated from entries in the register of Little Glenham School 1867-1877.
178. Calculated from entries in the Log book, Bramford School, 1865.
179. Professor Henslow became Rector of the parish on his retirement from Cambridge and was an active participant in many aspects of village life. Dobbs, A.E., Education and Social Movements, London, 1919, p.163.
180. Anonymous, undated parish survey found at West Suffolk Record Office. This may have been written by Professor Henslow.
181. P.P.1867-8 XXV, p.24.
182. Newcastle, P.P.1861 XXI.2.,p.247.
183. Diocesan Inspectors' Reports, 1851-2.
184. Annual Reports of the Ipswich Branch of the British and Foreign School Society, 1848.



185. Ibid, 1848-65.

186. Ibid.

187. Glyde, 'Ipswich', p.72.

188. Mary Carpenter, quoted by Stephens, 'education', p.92.

189. Glyde, ibid.

190. Stephens, 'Education', pp.322-323.

191. The proportions of illiterate brides and grooms in the two counties were as follows:

	<u>Suffolk</u>		<u>Norfolk</u>	
	M.	F.	M.	F.
1845	48	52	46	50
1850	47	48	41	44
1855	42	41	41	39
1860	38	30	35	30
1865	34	28	32	27
1870	31	22	30	24

Ibid.

Out-migration may have been a depressing factor in low male literacy levels, in that the educated and literate would have been more likely to escape the region,.This equally would have applied to women, however, with the unschooled ganging girl, for example, being unlikely to leave the region for a job in service. It is unlikely, therefore, that this was a significant factor in male/female differentials.

192. Ibid, p.79-80.

193. Figures for Lancashire were as follows:

	Male	Female
1845	40	68
1850	37	64
1855	33	59
1860	29	54
1865	24	46
1870	21	39

Ibid, p.322-3.

It will be noticed that the differences between male and female illiteracy declined by 1 per cent per five year period before 1865, with an acceleration in the improvement rate in female literacy thereafter. This may possiby have been connected with a decline in the factory

employment of married women in the spinning districts in particular. Female literacy tended to be higher in the spinning districts than in the weaving districts in 1871 (female illiteracy in Preston, for example, was 52 per cent, in Bury and Manchester 38 per cent), though the pattern is not entirely consistent. Ibid, p.327.

194. See note 193 above.

195. Ibid, p.94.

196. Illiteracy figures were 16 per cent male and 21 per cent female in Norwich in 1871; 14 per cent male and 18 per cent female in Ipswich. Ibid, p.332-3.

197. Ibid, p.327.

What a Women Knows is Comparatively of Little Importance to What a Woman is (1).

The study began with the observation that the formal education of working-class girls had been much neglected in historical research, with the 'established truths' of the history of education presenting a picture of elementary schooling undifferentiated by gender during the period 1800 - 1870, and with boys and girls having very similar experiences of schooling. In the nature of historical research, such 'truths' become subject to revision, and the perspectives offered by feminist historians have penetrated the history of education to the extent that a contrary view, assuming gender as an integral shaping factor in the provision and practices of elementary education, has been put forward in more recent publications. Indeed, this particular version of the history of girls' education in England has become sufficiently widespread for a recent review article to take as axiomatic the "well known" fact of "the injustice which denied women and girls the right to learn" during the nineteenth century. (2)

Many fascinating details of girls' schooling and of their wider educational experiences have emerged from this study to confirm, in broad terms, the latter



view. Issues of gender were integral to the purposes and practices of elementary schooling, at least in general terms. Girls were doubly disadvantaged, by their class and by their gender, in relation to their access to schooling and the nature of the education available to them, and, on the whole, their education was quantitatively and qualitatively more limited than that of working-class boys. But there is also evidence to support the former view, with a similarity of experiences between boys and girls and an absence of overt gender differentiation being sufficiently widespread as to lend some substance to this particular 'established truth' of educational history. While it may be said that the purposes of schooling were defined in gender- as well as class-based terms, with patriarchal ideologies assuming gender differentiation as axiomatic, this did not necessarily imply overt gender differentiation in the practices of schools. Nor were girls always 'disadvantaged' in their experiences of schooling, for boys equally might be handicapped by gender-based assumptions, with divisions of labour operating to define formal schooling as being irrelevant to their perceived needs whilst providing an incentive to the formal schooling of girls.

The study has highlighted significant variations in the nature and degree of gender differentiation in



education: over time and place, in provision and use, and between educational theories and schooling practices, which raised major questions regarding the causes and consequences of educational developments over the period. And no single, straightforward or static shaping element can be identified in the education of working-class girls, but a mixture of elements which took different forms and emphases within different social and occupational groups, with a complex interactive relationship between ideological, cultural, social and economic forces operating at a variety of levels to inform a variety of experiences over time and place. Thus, though a simple model of a 'double burden' of class and gender, operating to limit the formal education of women and girls, has some initial explanatory usefulness, it has obvious inadequacies as an interpretive framework for understanding shifts and variations in the purposes and practices of schooling and education over this 70 year period. For the ideological and cultural imperatives which defined the schooling of girls as being of paramount importance in the cause of social reform could be contradicted or supported by the operation of patriarchal ideologies embedded in the socio-economic organization of community life. And while the rationale of education for the lower orders derived

from social and cultural ideologies, the practices of schooling corresponded rather more to the economic requirements and structures of local production - which might or might not be in harmony with dominant belief systems. Nor were economic structures and requirements, nor even social and cultural ideologies singular or static, and the notion of what it meant to be a 'good' working-class wife and mother was also subject to considerable variation over time, place and circumstance .

Herein lay the crux of the matter, for, as Lown has argued, "in both ideology and practice, there were constantly shifting meeting points and contradictions between patriarchal and capitalist interests" throughout the period (3) as gender and class relationships were re-assessed and renegotiated towards the re-establishment of an equilibrium between economic and familial relations disturbed by the growth of industrial capitalism. And similarly, as an agency of cultural transmission operating in the socio-economic context of capitalism, the development of elementary education was characterised by tensions, shifts and contradictions in a continuing process of assessment and re-assessment, change and development.

Though utilising the practices of patriarchy in their exploitation of gender divisions of labour,

manufacturing interests had presented a major challenge to patriarchal relations through strategies for the recruitment and organisation of labour that conflicted with 'traditional' values and familial relations. And as one of the means whereby social and political order were to be re-established, the values of patriarchy were integral to the concept of mass schooling developed in the early part of the period, representing as they did a "major mediator" of harmony and order in the face of such unrest. (4) The 'order' that was to be restored to the industrial communities via the instillation of habits of obedience was one where adherence to 'natural' gender roles was axiomatic. But though the industrial region of Lancashire was targeted as being in particular need of the reforming influences of provided schooling, the 'upside down' world of the factory districts denied the theoretical imperatives of politicians and philanthropists, with the schooling and broader educational experiences of working-class children being determined by the economic structures and indigenous cultures of the community. The first rule of life was that of survival and girls were far too useful economically and domestically to be spared to go to school.

Failure to accept or adhere to the patriarchal values of educationists was not to deny patriarchal

ideologies per se. Perceptions of the purposes of education and strategies of survival were both mediated by traditional values and behaviours as well as by the economic structure of the labour market, and the opportunity costs of day schooling for girls, even if they could be afforded, were simply not worth it. By tradition, the purpose of education was to prepare boys and girls for their adult roles, and as the prime role of women was determined by their natural responsibilities within the family, so their education should be familial. Thus, though there was considerable common ground between different social groups in relation to the function of girls' education, with the production of 'good' wives and mothers being paramount, there were, as yet, class-cultural differences as to how, specifically, a 'good' wife and mother might be expected to behave, and the role of schooling in the transmission of 'appropriate' skills and behaviours.

The provision of mass schooling was not the only means whereby social and political harmony was to be achieved, and the goal of 'civilising' the working-class wives and mothers of industrial Lancashire was also pursued in more direct ways. A more creative concept of elementary education as an instrument of class-cultural transformation came gradually to replace the crude social control model of the later



eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, to give a greater emphasis to the achievement of an harmonious interaction between the 'education of circumstance' experienced by Lancashire women and the cultural messages conveyed by formal schooling. Class-cultural hegemony, rather than 'obedience under control', was to provide the lasting solution to social and political ills, and as the prime agents of cultural reproduction within the working-class family, the broader educational experiences of the women of the industrial communities should operate firmly to teach them the values and behaviours appropriate to their roles as wives and mothers. And if they refused voluntarily to accept their responsibilities to the detriment of the social order, then they must be compelled to accept them. Hence the imposition of 'protective' controls on women's employment in the factories and of compulsory schooling for factory girls.

By the 1830s and 1840s, however, the goals of bourgeois reformers were received with some sympathy by working-class groups and even by some industrialists, with the interests of patriarchy, of capital and of organised labour finding common ground in respect of the roles of working-class women in the industrial regions. This was not a one way process of transmission, with workers and industrialists

conceding to the cultural values of the bourgeoisie, but rather the intertwining of economic and patriarchal interests at a variety of levels and across a variety of sites coming together in a broad collusion of interests. Nor, indeed, was there a singular perception of what was appropriate to the roles of working-class women, with 'traditional' views co-existing with 'new' ideologies of the wholly domestic working-class wife in line with the organisation of production within particular occupations, and the material circumstances of working-class life and employment.

In what Lown has referred to as "the rationalisation of patriarchal relationships", (4) traditional strategies to safeguard the patriarchal and economic interests of male workers adapted to changing circumstances. Organised labour thus utilised the patriarchal ideologies of the bourgeoisie to give a 'moral' impetus to their claims, and to argue the exclusion of women from the work-place and the payment of a breadwinner wage to male workers. Through lengthy, sometimes bitterly fought, processes of conflict and negotiation a position was reached wherein the interests of capital and of the male workforce were accommodated via the structuring of the factory labour force in forms compatible with patriarchal values. For skilled

workers this meant the payment of 'breadwinner' wages sufficient to keep a wife at home in her 'proper' place, and employer/employee relationships characterised by paternalism rather than conflict. For all workers it meant the re-assertion of the secondary place of women in the labour market and of their primary role in the home and the family. As the values of respectability came to replace radicalism, and as reformism replaced revolutionary fervour, so also traditional patriarchy became adapted to the new order of industrial capitalism. From being a major source of social unrest, with the erosion of 'natural' gender roles threatening the material and cultural basis of patriarchy, patriarchy was now a major force for stabilisation.

The relationship between the interests of capital and of patriarchy in the early part of the century was not inevitably one of conflict. Little economic benefit was seen to be offered by the widespread employment of women in agriculture, and the organisation and recruitment of labour in farming presented little challenge to patriarchal relations. Yet, though there was a compatibility between patriarchy and capitalism that supported the continuance of traditional gender divisions of labour in the family and the work-place, the erosion and abrogation of bonds of social obligation between the

labouring and employing and land-owning classes generated considerable social tension by undermining the material conditions of working-class existence, and the status and authority of the male worker as the prime family earner. In this instance, however, there was simply no need to create 'moral panics' to support social cohesion, nor any incentive to call upon secondary strategies such as schooling for the purposes of social control; the immediate economic power of the farmers and their control over the system of poor relief were sufficient to maintain the status quo, with little possibility of overt protest on the part of the labourers. With an apparent absence of unrest, without any erosion of the traditional values of patriarchy, there was simply no need to label the paid employment of women as a 'deviant' practice. Indeed, such a step would have been against the economic interests of farmers and landowners, for in the context of high poor rates, the 'good' wife and mother of rural society was one who contributed as much as possible to the family purse. Similarly, with no immediate economic or social benefits to be gained from schooling the poor, there was little to encourage investment in education at national or local level, and the provision of schooling in the rural areas was left almost exclusively to the Anglican Church in association



with local National Societies. Even when covert protest flared into violence and incendiarism, direct coercion was sufficient to curb open revolt and, indeed, the provision of formal education to the labourers was seen more as a threat than a safeguard to the social, economic and political order. The influence of bourgeois domestic ideologies can be seen in the expressed perplexities of Commissioners investigating local conditions, but the notion that rural women 'ought' to adopt a wholly domestic role, or that they should be educated towards a proper appreciation of their 'natural' responsibilities generally was alien to the community culture of rural Norfolk and Suffolk before the 1860s. In short, the cultural transformation of the rural working classes via the schooling of rural girls was not generally seen to be a matter of particular urgency or even relevance.

Nevertheless, the example of Norfolk and Suffolk illustrates, albeit in negative form, the interactive relationship between local conditions and schooling, operating as an agency of class-cultural control and/or transformation, and functioning to reproduce the structure of the socio-economic (including class and gender) relationships as they 'ought' to be. In Lancashire the need to reform the working classes was seen to be acute, in Norfolk and Suffolk an apparent

acquiescence on the part of the men and women of the labouring classes in the socio-economic status quo removed the need for such reform. And where coercion was sufficient generally to subdue class struggle, local support for the provision and use of schooling corresponded to the organisation and requirements of the local labour market. Hence the relative advantages enjoyed by rural girls, with a lesser demand for their services in the immediate situation linked to an occupational destination where school attendance could be advantageous. It was only in the latter part of the period, when the possession of literacy skills could provide an escape route from the oppressions of labouring life, that a positive evaluation of the benefits offered by education for rural boys began more widely to be appreciated, at least by labouring families. Amongst the farming classes, however, the view that schooling undermined the social order and threatened economic prosperity continued to support a hostile attitude towards the provision of formal education.

And if class-cultural imperatives provided the motive force for a heavy investment in elementary education in Lancashire, immediate local support and demand for schooling owed rather more to instrumentalism and pragmatism. The purpose of schooling, as parents and employers saw the case, was

to provide a child with useful and marketable skills, and, as in Norfolk and Suffolk, the organisation and structure of the local labour market was more important a determinant on school attendance and provision than the expressed priorities of the education establishment.

Notwithstanding the existence of alternative viewpoints regarding the purposes of schooling, the goals of cultural transmission remained central to the 'ideals' of school practices for both boys and girls throughout the period, but with an increasingly less urgent emphasis than was evident in the early decades of the century. As the organisation of the factory labour force adapted to reconcile the interests of capital and of patriarchy in broad harmony, as market forces encouraged the provision and use of 'rational' schooling, and as notions of what it meant to be a good citizen merged with working-class models of what it meant to be a respectable worker and a good family man, so cross-class evaluations of what constituted useful learning and educational success came effectively, if pragmatically, to share the same criteria. A core curriculum of basic skills and 'really useful knowledge' was the cornerstone of this pragmatic alliance, representing as it did the common ground where reformist ideals and instrumental attitudes

could co-exist in harmonious reciprocity. In the good Lancashire schools, therefore, the practices of schooling, in terms of curriculum provision and school attendance, effectively integrated socialisation and instrumental purposes, in correspondence with the cultural and economic structures of the local community.

Continuing class divisions and antagonisms in Norfolk and Suffolk denied similar meeting points between working-class aspirations and the attitudes of employers, and the purposes of the predominantly Anglican provided schools in the rural districts continued to be dominated by the conservative attitudes of the Church. Nevertheless, though the socialisation function of provided schooling remained paramount in Norfolk and Suffolk, with no pressure from employers or working people to 'rationalise' rural schooling, there was a clear correspondence between the conditions of the local labour market and the socialisation purposes of educating girls. In short, for the children of Lancashire and the girls of Norfolk and Suffolk, the practices of schooling came effectively to merge socialising and instrumental functions in ways broadly acceptable to educational experts and members of the local community alike. For these children, if not for Norfolk and Suffolk boys, the practices of schooling



became compatible both with community values and the organisation of the local labour market.

This was not, on the whole, to the advantage of girls. Though the relative advantages enjoyed by Norfolk and Suffolk girls in terms of access to schooling may suggest that a compatibility between the socialisation and instrumental purposes of schooling necessarily operated to support formal education, this was not the case. For, as the example of Lancashire girls illustrates, the schools also had to be seen to offer positive advantages, over and above those available elsewhere, in order to attract parental and community support. And if factory work placed no premium on girls' academic attainments, why bother with schooling?

Indeed, even 'official' attitudes towards the education of girls may have reverted to some extent to the pre-industrial and traditional view that familial training in domestic skills represented an adequate education for girls. Certainly the view that the mother was the best person to teach a girl domestic skills and responsibilities was widespread across all social groups, and as reformism removed the urgency of schooling girls for the purposes of cultural reproduction, and as the values and behaviours of respectability increasingly permeated the industrial communities, the theoretical

importance given to the formal education of girls became less cogent.

For while reformist ideals had given some support to girls' claims to education, albeit at a theoretical level, instrumentalist attitudes derived from the organisation and requirements of the labour market only very rarely did. And even where they did, as was the case for Norfolk and Suffolk girls, the operation of patriarchal values and gender divisions of labour placed considerable limitations on the content and standard of the education thought appropriate to girls. While a little learning could be useful, the criteria against which girls' education were evaluated were derived from gender based assumptions about the skills and behaviours required of 'good', i.e home-centred, wives and mothers and of domestic servants.

This was - and is - the essential paradox of patriarchy and it is one which pervaded the whole development of working-class girls' education throughout the period. For, as we have seen in the first chapter of this study, notwithstanding assertions of the worthiness of the female role, women's responsibility for housework and child-care and their association with reproduction (biological and cultural) rather than production, meant that their work within the family was awarded little

value. Their primary role within the family also defined their work in economic production as being, ipso facto, secondary; of lesser importance to that of men, to be 'fitted in' around domestic concerns and 'worth' less economically and culturally than that of men. Equal, even 'superior' to men (in moral terms) in theory, working-class women like middle-class women were also supposed to be, and often were, economically dependent upon and subordinate to men. Across all social class groups, therefore, women were 'relative creatures', of lesser 'value' and status than men, requiring only a limited education of a nature and quality relative to their role within the family. Though subject to a variety of interpretations and re-interpretations throughout the period, the concept of the 'good' wife and mother, as being one primarily concerned with domesticity and child care in line with her 'natural' biological, intellectual and moral attributes, provided the bottom line to all aspects of girls' educational experiences, and it was not one that encouraged high standards of intellectual attainment for girls.

Whether shaped by ideology or instrumentalism there was no intention to 'disadvantage' girls educationally. The term is a subjective one, embedded within a wealth of cultural understandings, and the notion that limitations on the intellectual knowledge

and skills to be derived from formal education constituted a 'disadvantage' to working-class girls - even to working-class boys - would have been foreign to educationists and parents alike. Indeed, the intention was to confer advantage - both to girls and to society as a whole - by educating girls towards a proper appreciation of where their 'true' and 'natural' interests lay; that is, in the home. Really useful knowledge, therefore, whether acquired in the home or the school, encompassed both the immediately practical - basic literacy, needlework, domestic skills - and an understanding of the common cultural code of gender/class behaviours. Consensus took some time to achieve, but emergent in the struggles of the 1820s and established in the 1840s, inter- and cross-class understandings of the roles of working-class women, and the purpose and nature of girls' education had become compatible with patriarchal values and practices and the interests of capitalism. Working together in close and harmonious reciprocity, 'the education of circumstance' experienced by working-class girls was matched by the 'education of principle' provided, in theory at least, in the 'good' public schools.

This is not to state that the realities of girls' schooling necessarily reproduced the principles of 'good' female education, nor that girls inevitably



learned the lessons they were supposed to. Issues of resource provision and of daily attendance apart, evidence has been presented to show that the patriarchal cultural messages conveyed by the schools could be rejected by their female pupils. Even the teachers, supposedly carefully selected (and sometimes trained) to ensure adherence to the 'correct' moral and cultural code, could invert the patriarchal hierarchy of domestic over intellectual attainment to give a premium to the academic learning of girls - as the complaints of the Inspectors testified. Though the evidence is limited, it cannot be assumed that girls of this class learned the lessons of patriarchy from what they were taught in the schools.

Indeed, both the location and the chronology of changes evident in the lives and attitudes of working-class women suggest that formal schooling had very little direct influence on the developing 'home centredness' of working-class women in this period. For while Lancashire women were beginning to withdraw from an active and public involvement in 'male' concerns such as politics and trade unionism, and were even, if their circumstances permitted, withdrawing from public, paid employment from the 1840s, their access to formal schooling was so limited as to deny any major influence on the part

of the schools as important agencies of socialisation. Conversely, the 'educated' girls of rural Norfolk and Suffolk, though conforming to traditional gender roles, do not seem to have adopted or even articulated ideologies of domesticity until the 1860s.

Nonetheless, the education of working-class girls must be counted as a successful enterprise measured against the aims of educationists and reformers. For, taking education to include the educative influence of family and community life and of the labour market as well as schooling, evidence of changes in women's lives indicate that they were educated successfully to conform to their gender and class roles. Representatives of the Education Societies and individual Inspectors may have condemned the failure generally to appreciate the real importance of girls' schooling, others may have deplored the 'irrelevant' and 'over' education that girls may have received, and complaints may have been voiced about the erratic or non-attendance of girls at day school, but one is tempted to ask, in the context of the purposes of schooling girls, whether formal schooling was needed at all? Was it not, given the all-pervading strength of the patriarchal values embedded in the socio-economic and cultural circumstances of working-class life, almost a total irrelevancy for girls?

The point is exaggerated of course. Formal schooling could be the route to improved job prospects, with the pupil teacher scheme even placing some premium on academic attainment and offering some opportunity for an intelligent girl to advance through education. The fact remains, however, that more than schooling, more than individual ability or attainment, the future roles of girls were defined by their gender and their class, as indeed, they were intended to be.

Formal schooling might have offered more than this. Just as the onset of mechanised production offered the potential for more equitable relations between the sexes by undermining the material base of patriarchy, so schooling might have offered girls the opportunity to learn the knowledge and skills that would have helped them to fight gender inequalities. Both options, however, were equally unacceptable in a cultural climate that defined patriarchy as a major mediator of social and political stability. Some girls may have had an equal or even superior experience of schooling to that of boys, but such equality generally occurred only in the poorly resourced and poor quality schools, and very few girls - or indeed adult women - had access to 'academic' studies beyond the level of general knowledge. Indeed, high quality schooling, like

educational 'progress', was intimately associated with gender differentiation, with an acceptance of lower academic standards for girls as being entirely 'natural' and appropriate.

In sum, by design and by default, through 'success' and through failure, the education of working-class girls operated to support and legitimate the values and practices of patriarchy and the interests of capitalist economic organisation. As the school reading book quoted in the title of this chapter had it, 'what a woman knows' (or does not know) was 'comparatively of little importance to what a woman is', and whether schooled or unschooled, the force of the education of circumstance was such generally to compel adherence to the behaviours, if not the ideologies, of patriarchy. But as a final summary of the determining influences on the schooling and education of girls, a reversal of the statement is even more apt. For in the interests of patriarchy and of capitalist economic organisation, of political and social harmony, ideologies regarding 'what a woman is' were of profound importance in determining 'what a woman knows'. Women and men were different, their abilities and destinations were different, and, therefore, for the general good of society, their schooling also should be different.



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1. A Reading Book for Use in Female Schools, 1864, quoted by Beddoe, D., op.cit., p.97.
2. Sarga, J., 'Determined Women', review of Purvis, J., A History of Women's Education in England, 1991, The Times Educational Supplement, 13/9/1991, p.43
3. Lown, Women and Industrialisation, p.219.
4. Ibid, p.214.

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